THROUGH ISLE AND EMPIRE

BY THE

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TRANSLATED BY

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WITH A PREFATORY LETTER BY

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TO

HENRY VENN COBB

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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
	A LETTER BY WAY OF PREFACE . .	ix
	INTRODUCTION	xiii

PART THE FIRST

IN ENGLAND

I.	ARRIVAL—FOG—ECHOES OF WAR . .	3
II.	CORONATION TIME	13
III.	THE WALLACE COLLECTION . . .	24
IV.	SOCIETY—SUPPERS—SPORT	32
V.	SOME THEATRES	41
VI.	SOME HOUSES—THE THAMES . . .	50
VII.	COMPARATIVE MANNERS	66
VIII.	HENLEY—ALDERSHOT—HAMPSHIRE—THE POOL OF LONDON	83
IX.	ALONG THE SOUTH COAST—A VISIT TO RUDYARD KIPLING	92

PART THE SECOND

EGYPT

I.	CADIZ—GIBRALTAR—SPANISH DANCES .	107
II.	AT SEA—CAIRO	113
III.	ENTERTAINMENTS	117
IV.	TEMPLES AND TOMBS	121
V.	THE STREETS—HASHISH—IN LOWER EGYPT	130

PART THE THIRD
INDIA

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	At Sea—Calcutta—Gaieties	141
II.	Calcutta; The Zoological Gardens—The Squalid Quarters	152
III.	Hindu India—Benares	159
IV.	In Rajputana—Jeypore	171
V.	Moslem India—Old Delhi	178
VI.	The Mosque of Kutb'ul Islam—The Ruins of Tughlakabad	186
VII.	The Versailles of Akbar the Great—Fatehpur-Sikri	194
VIII.	The Old Gardens of Kashmir	209
IX.	The Palaces at Agra and Delhi—The Taj Mahal	216
X.	English India—Hill Stations—Simla	229
XI.	On the Slopes of the Himalayas—Gulmarg	240
XII.	A Poet of India	246
XIII.	Princes	253
XIV.	Kapurthala	261
XV.	More Maharajahs	267
XVI.	Tourists, Portraits and Masques	273

PART THE FOURTH
THROUGH DECCAN

I.	Down Towards Southern India	285
II.	Karli—Bijapur—Pondicherry	289
III.	Madras—The Great Pagodas	294

A LETTER BY WAY OF PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

My dear Vicomte d'Humières,

Thank you very much indeed for your book on the Island and the Empire which I have been reading with the greatest enjoyment. There are few things more interesting than to see one's own country from without and eyes that are as penetrating (and as merciful) as yours make the interest a keen pleasure.

From the point of view of an inhabitant, I am specially delighted with your tributes to the energy of the race, a thing which some of us at times to-day begin to doubt. There exists—I am glad you did not see it—an England which, ruined by excess of comfort, has gone to sleep and, because it snores loudly, believes that it is thinking.

Your comments on the Army seem to me very just. Above all, you have put your finger upon one vital point of our training

when you speak of the men who "understand that they must not understand." I think that is at the bottom of many of our successes and our failures. It is the first thing which we teach our boys.

Your studies of India were purely delightful to me, especially those of Rajputana, where I wandered once when I was young, through Chitor, Jeypore aud the rest. Of the South which interested you so much I know but little, though a great deal of the romance of dead India is there. I wish you had seen something of the new India. The India of the factory and the railway, the oriental moving unperturbed through modern machinery and adoring his Gods in the shadow of the engine-sheds and the boiler-rooms. It is not beautiful, but it is significant.

Believe me, I agree most cordially with all you say on the value of a good understanding between our countries; and this not only for the need of to-day, but for the hope of to-morrow. The two lands, so it seems to me, supplement each other in temperament and outlook, in logic and fact. Even if this were not the case, we must remember that there is not so much of liberty left in Eastern Europe

that the two leaders of Freedom should dare to dispute between themselves. We both have to deal with the "unfrei" peoples, the veiled and cramped lands where the word of a king is absolute power. If we should quarrel, who will profit? The Middle Ages with the modern guns. Isn't that true?

If I could see you, I could discuss more at ease than here a thousand interesting matters in your book. Notably what you have observed of the national coolness of temperament. No, our "chastity" is not all cant. It is an administrative necessity forced upon us by the density of the population. Imagine a land with four hundred people to the square mile—if they were penetrated with a refined and enduring sensuality! It would be an orgy! It would impede traffic. Consequently, we are brief and businesslike in such matters. Also it is a meat-fed people, of whom 6,000,000 (*or more than one seventh*) *live in a city which, for five months of the year, swims in semi-obscurity alternating with profound darkness. We realize that this is exciting to certain nerve-centres and we—the land—take exercise to counteract the stimulus.* "We understand that we must not understand." *To under-*

stand everything may be to pardon everything, but it also means to commit everything.

I have only one complaint to make, but it is a serious one. In your book you have said that I adore Offenbach! *I am not a musician, but even I have some dim knowledge of pleasing sounds and I fear you must have misunderstood me. No, not Offenbach, never Offenbach. Except on a barrel-organ, as a relief to the songs of the music-halls, my own perhaps!*

I would sooner be the "aggressive imperialist" of fiction than an adorer of Offenbach.

Very sincerely yours,

RUDYARD KIPLING.

BATEMAN'S, BURWASH, SUSSEX, *Aug.* 7, 1904.

INTRODUCTION

I

None will dispute that it is to the advantage of nations to know one another. The advantage becomes more positive when the object of our study is a neighbouring people whose civilization is influencing or must come to influence our own. And the advantage becomes one of the first order when, as now, the nation in question has but lately united itself to us by a compact, even though it were a purely utilitarian compact.

Any contribution towards this task of enlightening one's fellow countrymen as regards the souls and motives of a neighbouring race is useful and opportune. It is a case, in fact, of dispelling heavy and inveterate shadows of ignorance and misunderstanding. The humblest spark can lead us one step forward. Herein lies the excuse for this book.

It has no pretensions to academic harmony, to historical impartiality or to sociological serenity. It is a collection of impressions. Only, these are not quite the same that would be jotted down by a hurried or inattentive traveller. They have undergone the process of sorting rendered inevitable by the repetition of the same visits, by an increasing familiarity with persons and things, by long-continued sojourning, by the proof of men and views, by the study of books and the soil. These sketches represent in an imperfect and epitomized form the spoils of many journeys to England in the course of the last ten years, of two winters spent in Egypt and of a fifteen months' stay in India and Central Asia. In their variety, which will sometimes appear incoherent, the reader will perhaps discern a continuity of preoccupation : the psychology of the Englishman, both at home, in the midst of his traditions, and abroad, in the midst of adventure, in contact with different environments and peoples ; as in India, for instance, where he re-enacts daily, in his relations with the subject race, the memorable meeting of Alexander and the Gymnosophist, as told to us in the narrative

of the Greek historian : action and vision face to face and dumb.

The endeavour, therefore, of these pages is to give an idea of English life as seen from within rather than as observed from without. But I should not consider that I had completed the book which I have in mind if to these documents, which are in a measure abstract and inconclusive, I did not add some of the reasons why the group of mankind which the Anglo-Saxon race represents appears to me worthy, above all others, of our philosophic attention and our social esteem (as an eminently valid and hardy shoot of the specific tree) and well-suited to complete by its master faculties our natural gifts thrown into the common stock. It would be interesting to establish that the understanding which has just been effected is prompted not only by frail and perishable motives of convenience, but by more profound reasons derived from the respective temperaments of the two races and to draw an inference as to the future of this union (in spite of provisional denials) and the great lesson which the world can gain from a realized alliance of this novel kind. Lastly, by way of a first homage to that

English practical sense from which we have so much to learn, it would perhaps be well, in passing, to suggest a few preliminary actions, a few points of etiquette, useful little pieces of advice to prevent misunderstanding at the outset. I will try to indicate in advance the points at which there is a danger of our characters clashing, the occasions of distrust that have to be overcome, the feelings to be conciliated. There could be nothing more delicate nor more useful to be effected between two races which would complement each other less well if they resembled each other more.

It is here no question of idle panegyric or sentimental declamation. I would establish that the business has a great chance of benefiting the contracting parties and even conducing, in a more or less near future, to the general civilization of the world. I would reconcile the profound instinct which brings the two races together with the greater, the supreme instinct which is that of their preservation; I would look beyond the present and show the compact of yesterday becoming, for both nations, a guarantee of lasting strength and, for humanity, perhaps, the first

memorable example of an alliance already consecrated by geographical proximity, by kinship of institutions and blood, by reciprocal commercial advantage, an alliance from which we may one day expect an order of more intimate, more healthy and more general spiritual exchanges.

2

I can only summarily remind the reader of the reasons for which the English people presents an eminent type of the human species. Its constitution, which was praised by Montesquieu more than 150 years ago, its laws, an unequalled example of the adaptation of the political machine to the needs of the individual, imply the higher utilization of all the energies of the country. The aristocracy plays a preponderating part and yet its privileges do not cause it to forget its duties; moreover, it is open to all-comers: intellectual, military, industrial magnates rise to it, so to speak, mechanically, just as its younger sons fall back into the commonalty. It is an ideal which is constantly held forth,* which is in

* H. G. Wells: *Mankind in the Making*, chap. v.

no way unattainable, which creates emulation instead of creating envy. Lastly, it has not the ridiculous note of poverty.

The idea of fortune is logically allied with that of aristocracy. The great problem, how to transfer the powers of the aristocracy of birth, to-day in its decline, to the aristocracy of money, is here easily solved. Money rubs off its dirt at the contact of those of whom it has become the "peer:" this does not happen in America, which contains no inspiring model, nor in France, where, indeed, it seems as if the aristocracy, nowadays, took its tone from money.

As for the people, it would be difficult to assert that it is happier here than elsewhere, but at least it does not exhaust itself in hatreds and revolts and it is deeply imbued with a sense of the necessary inequality of social positions, which corresponds with that of human faculties. In any case, it is assured of two supreme benefits : liberty and justice. The respect that surrounds a magistracy above suspicion (observe the expression of an Englishman in whose presence a Frenchman indulges in the jests current among our people concerning the morality of the judges

of our Courts of Appeal and of Error: he will be profoundly scandalized) hallows a system of law from which, through all the lumber of its antiquated doctrines, shines an admirable regard for the sacred rights of the individual.

The race is a fine one, full of vigour and tenacity and combining both idealism and realism. The most marked characteristics of its men appear to be stoicism, the practice of truth, a sense of respect and hence of duty, generosity. In short, the Englishman presents a good specimen of the physical and moral individual in a society which espouses his wants and exalts his energies to the highest point in order to attain the best possible result.

None of all this is new. These summary outlines were necessary, however. The complete picture will be found in Taine's fine studies, those models of intelligence and impartiality, which, from the author's mental habit, the date at which he wrote them and the circumstances in which they appeared, admitted of but one tacit conclusion.

3

It would be of a more immediate interest to forestall the common objections and to endeavour to correct the more stubborn prejudices that separate the two nations. What are the favourite reproaches which we are accustomed to aim at the English character?

The reproach of egoism contains nearly all of them. It is marked by a sort of childish sophistry at the start, because it applies the old formulas of individual morality to those aggregations of individuals known as nations; and this constitutes a first cause of error. Imagine a nation that should be "meek and lowly in heart," that should "love its neighbour as itself," that should "turn the other cheek also," or practise only the elements of Gospel morality! The picture is absurd. The Emperor William II., a subtle exegetist and an irreproachable Christian, would find in the development of this idea an excellent subject for his next speech of welcome to the recruits of the German Empire.

I do not mean to say that this morality—that of asceticism, of the ancient *odium generis humani*—is any better adapted, in the era which is now commencing, to the individual than to the country. Its formula, discussed on every hand, has no longer over our minds the empire which it retains over our hearts. A noble action does, in fact, necessarily imply a sacrifice for our moral and æsthetic exigencies. Modern wisdom will still have a great difficulty in rendering palatable this simple truth, namely that an ideal can be disinterested only on pain of being unfruitful.

4

Under which forms does this English egoism chiefly offend against that pure model of disinterestedness and altruism offered by the French burgess of our Third Republic?

That which strikes him first is, perhaps, disloyalty. He complains of having been "done," he fears lest he should be "done" again. The revolts of sentiment pale beside this grave, primordial objection.

"Perfidious Albion" is a phrase invented by the pamphleteers whom Napoleon loyally

kept to besmirch the British dynasty and parliament. It made a great hit. It covered all the defeats due to the incapacity or improvidence of our governments in their relations with England. One of the most venerable stereotypes of our newspaper press represents us, at different historical moments, as "pulling the chestnuts out of the fire" for a greedy and faithless ally, whereas there would have been more just grounds for blaming our own inability to see, in a given situation, the real advantages that escaped us, in the Crimea or Egypt, for instance. We console ourselves by objurgating a more prudent accomplice and recognizing in ourselves a superior, though somewhat belated honesty. One is mindful of that phrase of Laclos' which I have already quoted in the text of this book :

"That is so like men ! All equally rascally in their designs, the weakness which they display in the execution they christen probity."

Without pretending to confer upon England a monopoly to which she does not herself lay claim, I may say that the love and practice of "fair play" (a sort of middle-

class chivalry) and of truth, those pronounced characteristics of modern English education and manners, have made their way into her political morals. Lord Curzon, for instance, furnishes an instructive type of that new generation of statesmen, endowed with bolder tendencies, a love of clear and swift solutions, a professed abhorrence of the diplomatic lie (see the preface to his book on Persia), a frankness which is the natural luxury of strength.* I know not that Mr. Chamber-

* That famous British perfidy appears very harmless in the face of the methods of certain rival Powers. Albion is an artless school-girl beside Russia. To prove this, I will quote the arguments which Lord Curzon uses to establish the reality of the Russian peril with regard to India. These are the plan for the joint expedition against India designed by Napoleon and the Emperor Paul; that of Skobeleff; that of Kuropatkin, the military heir of Skobeleff, who is the leading exponent of Central-Asian tactics in the Russian army and whose movements in the Russo-Japanese war England has every sort of reason for following with interest; the written testimony of M. Zinovieff, the head of the Asiatic Department of the Russian Foreign Office, admitting the political object of making an impression on England and checking her attempts against Russia's expeditions and progress; down to, lastly, the documents discovered at Kabul in 1879: the letters from General Stolietoff to the Amir of Afghanistan, provoking the latter, after the signature of the treaty of Berlin, "to treat the English with deceit and fraud," which Russia was to render fruitful by her support.

lain has ever been taxed with perfidy. He represents rather an extreme type of the opposite tendencies which we will now proceed to examine.

5

In default of cunning, one readily accuses England of harshness, pride and cruelty in her methods towards other countries, neighbouring or subject. Upon what are these accusations founded? Let us examine the gravest. The Irish question first presents itself: a complicated question, heart-rending, difficult to judge with coolness, It would seem as though England, after the brutalities of conquest, remained inert rather than hostile in the face of the problem set before her. Certainly, this inertia is none the less to be condemned; but such movements of opinion as the Home Rule campaign and such accomplished facts as the recent agrarian

Stolietoff was sent by General Kaufmann, the Governor-general of Tashkent, and the machination contrived by these two worthy soldiers was a master-piece of duplicity fit for the dreams of veteran diplomatists. Russia, for the rest, abandoned the Amir whom she had duped and "the good faith of Russia has never on either side in English politics found an honest spokesman since."

reforms of Mr. George Wyndham (which possibly mark the date of a real renascence for Ireland) have closed this phase and relegated the memories of hatred and oppression to that past in whose depths every nation hears the voice of remorse.

There is also the problem of India, where publicists, travellers and artists have allotted to England a direct responsibility for the ravages of famine. It would need a volume to study the question whether the sum total of welfare, justice and prosperity has increased in India under British sway. It seems impossible to deny it, notwithstanding the inevitable shadows on that huge picture. But new necessities have arisen. That swarm of humanity, due precisely to the security and the benefits of the English administration, is unable, subject as it is to the capricious rains, to solve the problem of its existence. England appears to be no more responsible for this calamity than France for the eruptions in Martinique. This is the conclusion that follows from the learned articles of M. Chailley-Bert on the immense network of canals of irrigation in India, from M. Albert Métin's lucid econo-

mical studies and, to mention some English sources, from the valuable information which I owe to the obliging kindness of Mr. H. Seymour Trower, the president of the Navy League, and of Sir William Lee-Warner, of the Indian Council.

Private initiative has sent considerable sums from England for the starving natives, of whom the greater number have been saved by the Famine Relief Works. I could mention poor members of the Indian Civil Service who have given up an important part of their pay for the relief of the same unfortunate people. Nevertheless, we read, in a book on India published in French (though not written by a Frenchman), such lies as the assertion that the Anglo-Indian officials receive additional allowances in times of scarcity! Man still remains powerless before the sport of the eternal laws that grind him down until he masters them. Bad faith, chattering imbecility, a certain sensuous pleasure in compassion all insolently make it their business to distribute the causes and effects of the most obscure phenomena, in whose presence true knowledge remains thoughtful.

Public charity, on the other hand, in

England herself, is exercised with a fulness which we have no right to grudge. Immense hospitals exist by the generosity of private individuals. No one can deny that the Englishman is a greater giver than the Frenchman. He is also more humane. No people displays so much solicitude for animals. The barbarism of the Spaniard or the oriental is unknown to him. Every tourist has seen, in the streets of Naples and Cairo, exhortations to show kindness to the beasts, watering-troughs set up for their benefit, both due to English initiative. This characteristic is not without its beauty.

I will add that England does not number among her institutions such standing reproaches as those schools of miscreants and desperadoes which we call disciplinary companies. A nation that tolerates such adjuncts to the liberties which it has proclaimed has no right to pass censure upon any other.

6

To return to English "egoism," it assumes, we say, other and mitigated forms upon which our prejudices bestow the names of

"haughtiness" or "coldness." This needs explanation.

Nothing is more disconcerting and afflicting to our expansive (sometimes theatrically expansive) natures than that English reserve which is nothing but the modesty of certain manly feelings, a superlative delicacy in refined souls, a scruple which at least dictates an incontestably noble attitude, despite its stiffness, to the average man.

It would be essential to remove the misconception created by a false interpretation of that "human respect" (an exactly expressive phrase) which screens the Anglo-Saxon's soul and causes him to dislike excessive gestures, sentimental quaverings, rhetorical or moral mummeries. This characteristic has its origin in a strong inner discipline, a certain sluggishness of imagination, a feeling for the "style" that best suits the obstinate rather than passionate genius of the English. They have promoted this tendency to the rank of a virtue and with profound reason. If its discreetness does not increase the charms of sociability or the easy confidence necessary for ordinary worldly relations, it gives guarantees against indiscretion, favours the home

life (among subjects susceptible to it, for, obviously, self-control is of value only among individuals endowed with a self to control) and imparts dignity, security and elegance to the life away from home. Every Frenchman who has had experience of England admits this. It is only fair to say that these qualities are common to all aristocratic culture. Our own possessed them, with an easy grace added. But we retain only the vestiges. Our democracy will perhaps look upon lessons taken from another country with less suspicion than upon those derived from traditions which it abhors and which it has but too well succeeded in forgetting.

Note that the Englishman does not maintain this reserve so strictly towards the foreigner as towards his own kind. It is not the solemn and supercilious distrust which we imagine to be kept up for the exclusive benefit of the alien, but a general attitude. To us it appears inconceivable that members of the same club, meeting day after day for twenty years or more, should not know such elementary facts regarding one another's lives as whether, for instance, they be married or unmarried. This occurs, however. Two intimate friends

who are separating for years, with a prospect before them of adventures, of dangers, of probable death, will display a stoical dandyism in talking, up to the last moment and to the parting pressure of the hand, upon indifferent subjects. Whichever we may prefer, we are bound to allow more dignity to this power of self-government than to the exuberance of the Neapolitan. The latter perhaps adds to the picturesqueness of mankind, the former certainly adds to its greatness.

Moreover, although this mask often covers vulgar souls, it also sometimes conceals the most delicate sensibility, an exquisite freshness of soul and of spiritual bloom, an engaging manly simplicity, a confidence yielded with an unconstraint and a loyalty that never belie themselves. And it is not a paradox to declare that the Englishman will perhaps raise this mask more willingly for a sympathetic foreigner, one speaking his language and appreciating his country, with whom he dares for a moment to unlace the harness of somewhat artificial constraint and convention in which the etiquette of his education confines him in the presence of his fellow-countrymen. The relations of friendship of this kind which

I have known and experienced have always left a lasting and kindly memory with the men whom they bound together. It is through meetings of this kind that the elect form the most profitable connexions: they usher in wider and more effective sympathies. It does, in fact, seem difficult to believe, looking at the progress which has been achieved, that the relations between peoples should remain for ever regulated by the same primitive instincts that cause the ferine to fling itself upon its rival or its prey and that the only advance made upon the methods of the stone age should be a mercenary alliance or a competition at the point of the sword.

7

English reserve, as it displays itself or rather shrinks back in sobriety of gesture, rarity of speech and reticence in broaching any personal subject, appears to us so strange that, in default of coldness, we tax it with being hypocritical. This brings us to the chapter of the hypocrisy of the English! How often have we not heard this reproach uttered against our neighbours? An im-

portant portion of our halfpenny press would be starved, if this other old stereotype were taken from it. This hypocrisy, superimposed upon the avowed worship of frankness, of fair play which I have just set forth, appears to us a refinement of duplicity. At first sight, our repugnance is justifiable. There is no greater effort of impartiality possible to a French brain than to explain cant and make excuses for it. Its roots touch the gloomiest conceptions of primitive reason: the savage's terror before the implacable Moloch. I spoke above of the love of fair play as a sort of middle-class chivalry: one might say of cant that it is a middle-class asceticism. It is an asceticism stripped not of its cruelty, but of its mysticism and its picturesqueness, an asceticism that has performed the feat of reconciling itself and its dogmas with affirmed piratical instincts and of installing the Ark of the Covenant and the Cherubim of the Old Law on board the beaked galleys of the ancestral Vikings. Wherefore cant, ridiculous and futile in its essence and its origin, burdened with every crime since the death of that truculent and genial Elizabethan England, the England of

Marlowe, Webster and Shakspeare, from the murder of Mary Stuart, that bright and passionate figure of the Renascence hated by the Scotch preachers, down to the exile of Byron and Shelley, the ostracism that struck a Swinburne, the gaol that opened to receive a Wilde, the political ruin of a Parnell convicted of adultery, this cant is to us abominable. It is, moreover, equally ridiculous in its fruits, for, in the extreme classes of English society, the highest and the lowest, it does not don a morality superior to that of other nations. There remains the middle class, the fount of the living strength of the country, which is still imbued with puritanical traditions, although its ideas are growing broader day by day. Well, it is difficult not to admit that, in this class above all, the excesses of cant represent the defects of valuable social qualities. Upon the whole, he who boasts of his virtue is better than he who boasts of his vices, although we must first determine the constantly changing sense of the words vice and virtue. England has not cleansed of the old sediments of asceticism those jars in which they still adulterate the wine of the new vintages. But she keeps

the jars. In France, we have only the press in which we dance crowned with vine-leaves, drunk, vainly drunk with the new wine of ideas that runs away and is lost.

Yes, this hypocrisy is the sign of a great respect for good. Only, it is the good of yesterday to which it is subjected by a farce which to us appears vile and which, in reality, is pious. In any case, it is provisional, for this good defined according to the formulas of future morality, that which is being elaborated at the bottom of the crucibles and under the lens of the microscopes, this good, once that it is proclaimed, will obtain an adhesion that will cost no effort to man's sincerity. The apparent lie takes its origin in a loyalty which men lay upon themselves towards the divine images and authorities of the past, at a time when they are being entreated by all the forces, all the aspirations, all the august impatiences of the future. I think that, possibly, England may one day owe to us, to the daring and fervour of our researches and our thought, the contents of a new duty. We will return to this presently.

8

There still remains the worship of money, the importance attached to money-making—that which Napoleon implied when he called his enemies a nation of shop-keepers—among the features which the English themselves are inclined to disparage in their own civilization.

It might, however, be brought back to this, that it is the most modern manifestation, the manifestation most immediately permissible and most ultimately fruitful of the ancient will to live. I see in it the lawful recognition of the most potent factor of our latter-day civilization. Money, in fact, is the symbol in which modern man concentrates and salutes his most vigorous hope and his most eager desire of life and strength. Gold is the most recent, the most urgent sign of the will of power. This sign was formerly the sword or the keys. To-day, the Cæsar, the priest abdicate in favour of gold; from the decrepitude of those once redoubtable forces the new master rises amid hypocritical hootings. This fact cannot be

discussed; it can only be accepted. It jars upon the most sacred beliefs of our inheritance, but we cannot order the morrow. A new morality will arise: it is already dawning. Wealth will have its duties and its saints. Art, the eternal laggard, will follow, no doubt, and some genius of the opening century will come, amid the magic of a work as colossal as *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, to release the gold from the curse of Alberich!

Our present duty is to thrust back our hereditary dislikes and to prepare, for the greatest conceivable good, the new universe which is being imposed upon our sons. Gold must be stamped with the effigy not only of appetites, but also of ideals, of every ideal. Gold rewards, as yet, only craft, economy, business instinct. It creates only a doubtful aristocracy. Every sort of superiority will have to owe its consecration to it. It will make duties for itself, in a manner automatically, before the threatening socialism. Capital can obtain safety only by paying tribute to the other forces of the race. It is a striking fact that this new conception of the duties of gold has appeared and is taking

shape in England and America. Cases in point are the will of Cecil Rhodes, the endowments of Mr. Andrew Carnegie and of so many other millionaires. These do great honour to the Anglo-Saxon race. A moral system which is formed not after an abuse nor under the incentive of an urgent necessity, but by the spontaneous impulse of generous minds constitutes progress. It is, therefore, a very correct sense of realities that tends, in England, to associate fortune with success in every career and also to crown fortune with honours. They bestow a financial reward upon a lucky general and raise a wealthy brewer to the peerage. In this way, the aristocracy is renewed. In this way, money is ennobled. These are harmonious exchanges of the future and the past which guarantee the health of the social organism, even as the harmony of the physiological exchanges ensures the health of the body.

9

I should like to close the chapter of grievances which certain persons persist in pleading against England with a few words

on imperialism. The word sums up the majority of the foregoing accusations and concretes them under the appearance of a sort of new cult which we love to picture as aggressive and voracious. Certainly, the instinct which it adorns with a fascinating label has allowed itself, like all vigorous instincts, to be carried towards excesses at which a thinker like Spencer, for instance, had every right to be afflicted.* No philosopher can praise the development of brutal appetites, the recrudescence of militarism, an apparent retrogression towards barbarism These, however, are only the first reactions of too lively a feeling on souls too primitive, something like the inherited gesture of carrying the hand to the sword at the appearance of the stranger, which hand is held out after the act has been linked with reflection.

Let us rather try to represent the purified conception which the choicer among our neighbours across the Channel form of a dogma which, for them, conceals neither pride nor the lust of conquest, but expresses only a higher mission that has devolved

* Herbert Spencer: *Facts and Comments* (*passim*).

upon England for the good of humanity. Lord Curzon does not hesitate to write, at the head of his *Problems of the Far East:*

"To those who believe that the British Empire is, under Providence, the greatest instrument for good that the world has seen and who hold, with the writer, that its work in the Far East is not yet accomplished this book is inscribed."

That is clear and distinct.

Some months ago, in an article devoted to Lord Curzon, the present writer ventured to make the following reflections:

"There is no more interesting phenomenon in the history of modern England than this opportune crystallization of an altruistic ideal and this anxiety to dignify her aspirations. Its interest seems greater yet from the speculative point of view: never did a better opportunity offer for studying the origin of moral systems. In so doing, one is exposed to the temptation of an irony all too easy. In no case could this be addressed to any particular nationality to the exclusion of the

others. Ancient moralists contended that love was based upon esteem : humbler than the love of individuals, the love of nations, to whose coming all thought worthy of the name looks forward, must learn, to begin with, to be satisfied with less. No social group has the exclusive privilege of virtue or of disinterestedness, any more than the right to disparage others. Among the more powerful groups, their very power exposes more greatly to criticism their methods of self-preservation and extension ; it seems more dignified to look with the composure of scientific observation upon the working of these totalities and not to give ear to the slightest suspicion of that sentiment which is as ugly as it is unphilosophic : I mean jealousy.

"Here are the facts. A race endowed with adventurous and commercial instincts has seen these hereditary impulses aroused for more than a century by the conquest of India. An enormous field is opened to its enterprise, a field in which all its energies stand self-revealed, become inured, multiply and, lastly, seek new outlets. The conception of the British Empire appears, takes shape, is anxious as to its legitimacy. There is a

question of presenting to the world the new-born imperialism, rugged as yet of aspect, far from reassuring for the greater part . . . O joy, 'twas a Messiah! Peace to men of good-will.

"And let no short-sighted sceptic come to sum up his impression in such phrases as that England has become rich enough to pay for an ideal, or make unkind comparisons with those old financiers to whom a belated honesty is only a more expensive luxury. No; in insisting upon her civilizing task, the most marvellous thing is that England may be right. In landing her bales and starting her caravans, she has simply proved her greater fitness for managing the traffic of the planet. And, in the name of the planet's interests, which include her own, she claims that task as hers. That is all.

"If there be any irony in this, it is superior, cosmic, but it will not rouse laughter at England's expense, or at least not for long. The question thus put allows of only one reply on the part of the rivals of this champion so certain of her strength: to do better. In every human being, the right to rule is measured by his capacity for ruling.

"Let us add that a poet has arrived to add an æsthetical to the ethical imperative spontaneously begotten of the needs of the hour. After the sanction of good comes that of beauty. Your activity is just, says conscience; it is fine, replies Kipling. A great gratitude rose up in return towards the inspired one who thus crowned the ancient and patient effort of those men and of their fathers before them, fulfilling the most elating functions, perhaps, that ever devolved upon the lyre. And Lord Curzon, in the course of an official speech, pays Kipling the compliment of a quotation, a witness to a like orientation and a common passion in the poet and the statesman. How powerful a social organism is a nation in which forces in other respects the most at variance display this homogeneity, in which the elect really guide the crowd instead of running too far ahead, in which men waste so small a part of the national intelligence and will!"

Other arguments would contribute towards showing in imperialism a play of fatal forces, inevitable in any living organism to which expansion is a law of its duration. And,

mark this, it is not with expansion that we have to do as much as with co-ordination. Imperialism has for its first wish the close union of the colonies and the mother-country. It is not vexed with needs of immediate annexation, it only takes care, logically enough, that the spheres of its probable extension shall remain free. It obeys resistless vital laws, against which our prejudices of individual morality struggle with the most touching, foolish and vain obstinacy.

From a loftier point of view, we ought to pay England, philosophically, the homage due to every powerful desire for unification and simplification, to every tendency to pass from the heterogeneous to the homogeneous. Hatred and war reigned, in days of old, between city and city; later, between kingdom and kingdom; to-day, they would set coalitions face to face; to-morrow, continents. War, I mean the bloody struggle, becomes more difficult in proportion to the masses which it would have to put in motion. The formation of these masses, the agglomeration of the nationalities, whatever the necessity that prompts or the sentiments that inspire them, seem to presage the desirable era when

slaughter complicated with geometry will no longer be the really heroic form of the eternal battle.

10

I leave to an Englishman animated with sentiments and wishes parallel with those which have inspired these pages the care of pleading with his fellow-countrymen on behalf of the French faults that shock them the most. These are principally a cynicism of ideas, a cynicism of morals, an anarchical and railing love of negative criticism. But I believe, in good faith, that they have less far to go to meet us than we to meet them. I have a score of times verified among the pick of intellectual and artistic England the attraction exercised by French culture. George Meredith, who holds in English literature the position of discreet eminence formerly occupied among ourselves by Mallarmé; J. M. Barrie, a devotee of Balzac; the great Swinburne, who writes admirably in French (and even in archaic French) and who has devoted the most enthusiastic of books to Victor Hugo; John Bodley and Edmund Gosse, tried friends both; Henry James, an

Englishman by adoption, to whom our language and our literature are as familiar as to many of our academicians: these and many others all love our country! And I would go so far as to say that the sympathy which they show is inseparable from the intellectual and artistic development in England and that it almost always accompanies an individual superiority of this kind.

As for the people, it is ignorant, but cordial. I have verified this too. To the mind of the people, the great misfortune of not being born an Englishman gives any inoffensive stranger a claim upon its sympathy. We have the first claim. On the other hand, it hates the Germans, even more than it hates the Russians: it will never make friends with any nation, not excepting America, more willingly than with ours.

The practical aspect of the question is the necessary and increased diffusion of the English and French languages in the two countries. Both show a certain want of capacity for this study. This originates only from the absence, hitherto, of any pressing need. The two idioms, indeed, are the most widespread languages on the planet:

a striking fact, rich in consequences, heavy with arguments. A man who possesses both holds the keys of Latin civilization and Teutonic civilization, that is to say of the greatest treasure-house of human knowledge. This fruitful necessity is bound to spring from the reconciliation of the two peoples. The verb *s'entendre* expresses it eloquently.

Space fails me to unfold here a practical plan (in the English fashion) for a rational teaching of the two languages. The suggestions that present themselves to the mind in this matter are many. They will form the subject of a separate study. It is enough to say, for the moment, that the manner in which this teaching has, until very recently, been conceived and practised in France deserves no other epithet than that of ridiculous. In England, the inadequacy of French teaching was set off by a result which was rough in itself, but at least useful as a means of primitive communication. Mr. H. G. Wells, in his *Mankind in the Making*, says that he is sure "that it would be a very painful and shocking thought indeed to an English parent to think that French was taught in school with a view to reading French books"

(I need not explain what the term French books suggests at the first blush to an average imagination in puritan England). A plan of common action in both countries (allowing, of course, for all the shades and differences demanded by the difference of temperament) would first have to be worked out with this object. Next, it would have to be applied by every available means: the press, publicity, parliamentary action, appeals to capital. We ask for only an infinitesimal part of all the gold that flows towards the works of a charity blind enough to sacrifice the interests of the race to that of its most feeble, that is to say of its most dangerous individuals! There would necessarily be connected with the scheme a system of journeys, of mutual visits, the organization of which would combine a number of valuable collaborations and ingenious initiatives. Everything is to be done in this domain. The honour and the profit will reward the pioneers no less than the settlers of the conquered territory. We offer not only an apostleship, but a "business:" none but the clumsiest folly could refuse to see it, none but the most inveterate hypocrisy to proclaim it. Modern ethics have once

again boldly identified man's interest with his duty. They should never have been separated.

II

The reader would do wrong, judging by the foregoing, to expect to find in this book a stubborn panegyric of England, characterized by a methodical partiality, dictated by a definite intention, tending towards a clearly-proposed object. If this were its nature, the study would lose all critical value and the author is anxious to state that the following notes, taken at times anterior to the writing of these present lines, constitute straggling, unconsidered documents from which he has formed the presumptions which he ventures to set forth here. These documents have not followed on the thesis, but have come before them. The reader has but to look through them to convince himself of this.

I know not what the future of Franco-English friendship will be. Our noblest hopes encroach imprudently on the ironical future, even as our most ambitious formulas are riddled buckets which we lower in vain into the well of truth. We know all this. But,

having not elected to die, we decide to live and as entirely as we can. The false scorn of self-complacent reason does wrong to smile at seeing the English unhesitatingly take up the nearest work to hand, without providing for the morrow and its perhaps contradictory needs. This is a grave error of our intelligence, tainted of itself and limited by itself. That instinct for labour is, on the contrary, the first of all forces. It errs, it will err, so long as the laws remain unknown. But those laws are becoming better known daily and the habit of work is the one thing which it is important never to lose.

Whatever the future may be, it cannot be a useless task to have tried to set up on the horizon of time a true image of a successful people. No form of activity, when one knows how to look at it, in the corruption of its end or the rawness of its birth, escapes insatiable beauty. But I do not know that, notwithstanding the decree of the purists, the promises of happiness contained in an ideal of æsthetic harmony need necessarily degrade it.

Of all unions of nations outlined at the

present time none is more capable of maintaining life or more worthy of being served in the presumable interest of mankind. This alliance has militating in its favour not temporary or superficial reasons, but instinct, the need to behold the realization of that higher harmony of faculties and forces which the fusion of national temperaments so complementary as these would imply. This desire (which, in a manner, is as disinterested as the wish of a well-disposed Martian mindful of the rhythm of our terrestrial civilizations) is none the less patriotic for that. It is a rare piece of good fortune to find two imperatives, that of the general and that of the national good, too often hostile, now reconciled in one fair hope.

Let us take the question in its least particular form. It may be said that the fundamental difference, the respective superiority no less than the weakness of the two peoples, is that one sees the universe under an intellectual aspect, the other under a moral aspect. The Englishman refuses to separate the moral end from the idea; where we are concerned, morality must adapt itself to the idea: that is morality's affair. The Frenchman

is a theatre of ideas: they are so many masks whose dance affords him the most delicate pleasures; but let one of them arise in the nudity of the brain of a Saxon or Slav: forthwith imperious, eloquent, behold it ready to enthral him. The result of our love of the psychical ballet is a more brilliant civilization, animated, ventilated with perpetual discussions, sifting every conception and every principle, a civilization doubtless indispensable to the intellectual movement of the world, but dangerous to itself through lack of homogeneity (for elasticity does not always supply the place of resistance), dangerous through the rashness of the experiments which it proposes and which it risks in the exhausting crises of its revolutions.

No doubt it is a good thing that truth should constantly be called into question. But we do not prove our grasp of the law of continuity by violently and continually shaking the belief of yesterday to its most sacred foundations before preparing a shelter, were it but a wretched makeshift, for the sorrowful herd of which it was the only lodging. Truth, like the human being, must eliminate its decaying elements without con-

vulsions, by the very law of its growth. To attack it at its foundations is to threaten its very promises. One does not graft the tree upon the root. Spiritual voluptuousness, which is our capital sin and which intelligence finds gnawing at its base, in a manner reduces the exquisite art and the supreme irony of our intellectual nihilists to the level of the stupidity of the Catoblepas, which, when grazing, unconsciously devours its own feet. How different it is with the Englishman, with his simple equipment of principles, at once stops and props, beyond which he considers it indecent to let his reflections run! The speculative boldness of the German alarms him; the Russian, with his habit of pushing an idea to its ultimate catastrophe, offends his common sense; French scepticism inspires him with a curiosity which is a little anxious, sometimes charmed and sometimes contemptuous, according to his degree of culture and comprehension, although, at bottom, the most Athenian of our smiles must produce upon him the effect of the grimace of a monkey putting out its tongue at itself in the glass.

Now in both countries there is a chosen class that perceives the defects peculiar to its culture. This is a considerable phenomenon, upon which we must insist, for it is new in the history of general civilization. No people before modern times possessed the necessary amount of personal and comparative documents to form as it were an impartial idea of its own tendencies and capacities. It has been said that races possessed no justice except within doors: the same might have been said of their intelligence.

These tendencies (supposing the impossible case that they should be exercised under seal, so to speak) would end by making of London a Babylon of coal and gold, some warehouse of the world, a soulless metropolis of innumerable counting-houses, and of Paris the Rome of a sort of intellectual and iconoclastic papacy, without temporal dominion, ere long delivered to the contempt which the sophists and Græculi have always deserved. Still, these previsions are but a jest and I will at once ask the reader to excuse me, here and later, if I endeavour sometimes to fix his attention by means of lively images.

I know no intelligent Frenchman that has reflected or travelled, be it ever so little, and is not ready to admit our national faults, too often, indeed, with a wealth of disparagement which is calculated to scandalize the foreigner who listens to it. On the other hand, the book from which I have quoted above, *Mankind in the Making*, points with great precision to the movement of modern ideas that directs the evolution of English culture. The cry of the English writer is, "Give books!" He is constantly returning to it, as representing the most urgent need of the hour. Whereas, with us, our critics warn us against the opposite danger : we have too long kept up the barren cult of bookish learning ; what we need is the direct lessons of observation, facts and life. . . .

In that brain of the cosmos which is the human race (I know all the criticisms and reproaches of anthropomorphism which people address to this sort of analogy : nevertheless, we must return to it, once that we have the notion of that continuity of phenomena of which M. Dastre says so justly, in his fine work, *La Science et la vie*, that it is "a form of mentality"), the differentiation always at

work has created cells which, served by the senses, weave upon the loom of the nervous fibres images of the outer world, images of every kind, artless, ingenious or beautiful. Such is their charm that their artificers become enraptured with them, sometimes, one would think, to the point of forgetting that the need which prompts their task is, before all, perpetually to conclude, from the shadows cast by outside things upon the woof of the soul, which movements, which acts are best adapted to the preservation of the total organism. In other cells, on the contrary, the faculties for co-ordinating external teachings attain a fuller development. It seems that the division of labour, the fundamental law of evolution, presides over the play of these activities, which seem to separate only soon to unite more closely than before in the harmony of a higher life.

The conclusion of this apologue will not have escaped the reader. Nothing is more logical or more desirable than to associate two human groups, of which one, France, has the gift of supplying the brightest representations of the planetary conscience, while

the other, Great Britain, possesses the tried wisdom and power of co-ordinating the lessons of those images conformably with the greatest usefulness.

This wish will, no doubt, appear Utopian: to tell the truth, what I have here sketched is, above all, an ideal alliance. It will be formed some day, across other frontiers, what matter! The disillusions of the present count only in existences limited by the cradle and the tomb. Besides, it is well to open up large perspectives: they lend dignity to the foreground. Moreover, the star-gazer who falls into his well cuts, in the main, a less comical figure than those apostles of common sense who from the Promised Land of the possible carve out little provinces according to the measure of their intelligence and their generosity.

I do not think, for the rest, that we should look very far into the future for a motive and a reward for this hoped-for union. England has the habit and the love of duty: she keeps the mental mould into which we are eager to pour the glowing metal that bubbles in the crucible of our thought. We

can cast in it the statue of a beautiful morrow.

What that future duty (without which we die) will be science will teach us. We can look only to science for that revelation. Science, in less than a century, has re-created the universe around us. We hardly notice it, we who have so long been kept asleep by the old dreams. The religions and moralities of the past, encampments of an hour's duration, were built up on the old formidable and ill-apprehended instincts. Here verily is the twilight of the Gods and the deliverance of Prometheus. The great myths clasp and respond to one another. Zeus, Odin, Yahveh trampling nations under foot have crumbled into the abyss. But it is not the voice of useless and cowardly renunciation that hovers over their ruin ; the Nixies have not for ever carried away the prophetic gold from the depths of the Rhine. The liberated Titan whose name is Work, Effort, Hope lifts the gold made young again towards the sun. Black, fierce, bloody, hideous as thou art, hail, son of Chaos and Sorrow, father of Mankind ! The opening era will take up thy idyll by the voice of all

its geniuses, at that turn in the human road where the genius of the age that is ending, a victim of the ancient witchcrafts, refused to hear, instead of the bells of Montsalvat, the sublime sound of thy broken chains!

The tables of a new Law are in liberating hands: characters as yet mysterious, for ever mysterious, which the two elders of the world's civilization are about to spell out with foreheads brought close together and with joined hands.

But let us leave this region of symbols, distrusted by the crowd.

And, to take leave of metaphorical language, let us say that the new conception of good and evil which science is elaborating will create a new duty. We shall doubtless be the first to perceive it, but England would teach us the prudence and the practical wisdom that should preside over the passage from the morality of yesterday towards that of to-day. She is already taking preliminary action. The bishops no longer fulminate against the scholars. With her aid, we shall perhaps form a first necessary notion of *respect*. But into this respect we shall have flung the

purest portion of the spoil of intelligence: it shall be no longer dupery or pharisaism. It shall acquiesce with smiling piety no longer in the lie of the immutable essence, but in the truth of the eternal Becoming, in truth ever provisional, rejuvenated, perpetually breaking loose from itself, like virtue and like beauty.

12

I trust that many clear-sighted and well-intentioned minds will make good what is lacking in the foregoing statement and be able to discern in it some reasons to believe in the national as well as human interest which the two peoples would have in uniting. It is time, in the history of the globe, that two nations should set the example, so rich in noble promises, of this understanding, whether it be limited to a more intimate reciprocal acquaintance with each other's institutions and souls or end in the narrow communion of our effort and our social life by throwing into common stock our respective contributions to culture and the world's progress. Those minds and ener-

gies whom the destinies of the world adjure will next have it as their task to work for that future. It is a duty to prepare it; it is already an honour (of which we modestly claim our share) to have felt it coming.

R. d'H.

Port Méjean, Cap Brun
May 1904

PART THE FIRST:

IN ENGLAND

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

CHAPTER I

ARRIVAL—FOG—ECHOES OF WAR

I

The train bears us towards London, through the fat fields of Sussex, and I feel the strange soul that exhales from these grassy meadows where herds of cattle graze, from these gently undulating hills where stately trees stand grouped in clusters, from these bright brick cottages set between a garden and a tennis-court. The simplicity, the ease of this serene country-side are found again in the conceptions, the actions and doings of these men. Theirs are souls in which certainty has built its nest; this landscape explains and annotates them. They are provided with three or four solutions, implying the same number of principles; they manage to live on that; and they take only in moderation the wine of general ideas with which Germany intoxicates herself. They are a race of men of action whom analysis does not amuse. And then one says to one's self that they have had Shakspeare, poets of the imagination like Shelley, of desire like Swinburne, painters like Turner,

artists and men of adventure as bold as those whom any race has flung into the human ideal and one feels, beyond the undefinable attraction of men and things, a need to understand, to bring one's own contribution, however humble it be, towards the mutual apprehension of soul and motive which the absurd races of mankind are so slow to realize.

2

It was not a true fog, notwithstanding the lighted street-lamps, the slackened pace of the carriages, the complete darkness at eleven o'clock in the morning.

"The real fog, sir, is when the water-fog comes up from the Thames and mixes with the smoke of the city," says a native.

Then, traffic becomes impossible; you cannot see eighteen inches before your face; you must give up the idea of going out, of keeping your dinner-engagement: everything is suspended.

I have not seen this plague of darkness, but, all the same, the fog on this morning of my arrival strikes me as fairly successful. Through the glass of my sash-window, I see the daylight of an aquarium, a sooty glimmer that varies in shade from pearl-grey to dull yellow, flickers heavily and reluctantly filters the decomposed rays of a distant and lost luminary, more lost than the sun of those arctic nights which are but one long night. Outside,

the lighted gas-jets, the lamps of passing carriages shine red in haloes that seem to muffle the light even as the mist muffles the sound. A fantastic atmosphere, inhabited by a people of inordinate or laughable shapes, in which the three dimensions seem to indulge in a sly quarrel. Wills-o'-the-wisp pass and men in frock-coats, messenger-boys and flower-girls whose shabby feathered hats flee through the mystery of the haze like poor, drunk birds. A luminous clock-face bores a hole in space and hangs like a moon, for the tower that carries it is invisible; and a bell vaguely rings out the time that it must be on this unknown world. You receive an impression as of another planet and forget that the clock which you hear up there is Big Ben, that those trails of mist are fastening on the old Norman roof of the venerable Abbey, that Westminster Bridge—and not some causeway filled with meteors and ghosts disguised as clerks and policemen—plunges there, before your eyes, riding the abyss whence new layers of vapour rise perpetually, in soft and lazy scrolls, over the granite parapets, the trees of the squares, the roofs of the houses, the illuminated sky-signs, the steeples and domes, the stars and the skies.

And the strangest thing, in the depths of that town foundered as after some mighty shipwreck in the seas of the sun, is that you discover a strange voluptuousness in this transfigured scene, in the novelty of this irrecognizable and illusive world. The particular odour of the fog, an alkaline odour, with a

base of creosote, ends by pleasing; an enveloping, mellow charm persuades you; from the heart of the phosphorus and honey-coloured mists issues a penetrating and heavy languor. How intense must be the sage's meditations, how close the lover's embrace, in those rooms, near the fires on which "the red-armed servant-maid" of whom Mallarmé speaks heaps her noisy coal! In what a fine gravity must thought and kisses be decked here, far from the shameless daylight, under the streaming veils of the widow city. And yet, when all is said, it is only on such days as this that one really understands the almost celestial charm which imaginations fed on these fogs have always discovered in the land of the sun, Italy, the Italy of Shakspeare and Turner, the land where Keats and Browning lie buried, the happy country of every noble exile. Certainly, these must have known an Italy fairer than our dreams, a Promised Land of beauty all the more desired, all the more adorned with fascinations in that it was coveted longer and from a remoter distance.

3

My railway-carriage is suddenly invaded, at the station that serves Shorncliffe Camp, by five gentlemen in khaki on their way to London. They are lively, very lively, but deferential nevertheless. If they have sat down on my hat, they are sorry; and my offer of cigarettes touches them. They apologize

for breaking in upon me and, for five minutes, I watch the most ineffectual efforts to lop their ordinary speech, in my honour, of its soldierly flowers. Nothing could be more touching or more useless : the dashes and asterisks shoot forth, as though by magic, at the four corners of the conversation ; they give up the attempt on perceiving that their travelling-companion thinks them much more amusing as they are ; and all ends in the proposal of a toothful of whisky from a flask taken from a great-coat pocket and handed round.

Henceforth, we are good friends : I ask them where they come from, the names of their regiments. The oldest is, perhaps, thirty-five ; the youngest, whom they call "Kid," is barely eighteen. They are African and Canadian colonials ; they wear the felt hat, turned up on one side, which has become a familiar object in the streets and refreshment-bars of London. They have been sent to England on sick-leave and are now going back to their own country or returning to the Transvaal. They talk without restraint and it is all singularly instructive. Names of generals are mentioned in the conversation ; appreciations, judgments, comparisons are made. What a gulf between the psychology of these men and that of a French soldier ! Those commanders of whom they speak, generals no longer able to count their reverses or the human lives uselessly sacrificed to obtain new reverses, those army-leaders who, in the opinion of my own country, would be for all time discredited, despised, ruined, done for,

are named by their soldiers in tones of respect, admiration and confidence! It is not put on, they do not take me for a foreigner, they talk with the same freedom as if I were not there:

"Buller, there's a man for you!"

"Cheers for old Buller!"

I see once more the heavy, square-jawed face which figures in every shop-window, on every wall, on every box of wooden matches, to remind the English of the shambles of Colenso.

"And Gatacre! What do you say to Gatacre?

I venture to insinuate:

"I thought that the men didn't like him, that he wore them out. Surely they used to call him Gutsacher?"

"Him? Why, all his men cried when he left. He used to tire you, if you like, but at least he fed you."

They are proud of that one too, as of the others. They are proud of him on principle, because you must be proud of something when you're an Englishman; they are proud, first, because they do not understand and, next, because they understand that they must not understand. A profound instinct warns them against intelligence, the enemy of action. They have a dim presentiment of the dangers of analysis. If it is bad to be led by incapable commanders, it is worse to know it, for that makes them no better and they are obeyed with less self-denial. They could, no doubt, be changed; but commonsense suggests that the new ones would not differ

perceptibly from the old. This is how the men argue, these men in whom the hierarchical sentiment, social as well as military (M. Chevrillon, in his excellent articles in the *Revue de Paris*, gave, among other reasons for General Buller's popularity, his quality as a country squire), does not exclude the sense of solidarity. This state of mind among the combatants appears enviable beside that which would undoubtedly prevail among French soldiers in similar circumstances: every order discussed, suspected, jeered at; the personality of each superior officer pitilessly judged; every strategical movement submitted to the criticisms of camp-fire Jominis; and all under the irritating suppression of an ill-conceived system of discipline, which has slain initiative, but begotten jealousy and discontent. The histrionic qualities essential in a leader of men are infinitely more necessary for a commander of Latins, who is bound to keep up a chronic state of enthusiasm, lest he be accused of incompetency first and treachery after! But then, what ought not to have been effected with such fighting-machines as these English soldiers, whom discipline, devoid of any galling strictness, has not robbed of a sense of their individual value and who are, nevertheless, so easy to lead, with their confidence so quickly given, their energy which is not impaired by too much education or intelligence, their extraordinary spirit of patriotism!

4

Another bell, a new scene. We are at Bournemouth, the pleasant resort on the Hampshire coast which shares with Torquay the sovereignty of that pale and charming English Riviera. The cliffs are crowned with pine-forests, the weather is mild, old ladies are being taken out in little carriages. The smart hotel of the place pushes the red railings of its garden of laurels and box-trees almost to the edge of the cliff. The inside is all covered with frescoes, real frescoes, painted by hand, with a romantico-Louis-Philippo-Pompeiano-chromolithographico-middle-class comicality which produces the most magnificonsequential effects. These old, more or less neglected watering-places, some of which were at the height of their splendour in the days of the Georges, Bath, Tunbridge Wells, where Brummell flourished, often display those architectural phenomena of which the minds of the decorators of the Victorian era were delivered after their courageous, but rejected attempts at flirtation with fancy.

To-night, seated round a comfortable fire that, by way of paradox, warms a room in the Moorish style in which Boabdil would have suffered, we are once more talking war with two friends, one of whom, a lieutenant in the militia, has just returned from Africa after thirteen months' campaigning. He has a sense of the picturesque, of emotion; he has

"seen" things. This is very rare in a soldier, especially an English soldier. In India, among many officers of the late Queen, I met only one, a captain of Goorkhas, who possessed that gift of live and tragic detail. I shall never forget a certain story of an Afghan transfixed by a British lancer and *running up the lance* stuck through his body so as to be able to slash at the trooper's fingers with his knife.

My friend's tales were no less exciting. We saw war pass before our eyes, hideous modern war, without dash or intoxication, which is as disconcerting to the neophyte as M. Deibler's prosaic guillotine must be to the prentice journalist who dreams of scaffolds and gallows. The long marches, the torturing thirst, the consideration shown by the soldiers at the halting-place to the good-natured officer, visions of young corpses leaning against an ant-hill, holding a photograph in their hands, or of a soldier, with his stomach torn away by a shell, bursting with laughter at the ridiculous spectacle of his scooped-out body: all this procession of horrors and iniquities went by at the call of the speaker's memory or his hearers' eager questions; for nothing is more fascinating than stories of death.

The witness talks without vehemence, judges his enemies coolly and in all good faith: of that there is no doubt. Very interesting is his appreciation of the Boer character:

"A consummate selfishness; shows no interest in the collective mass nor any patriotism, in the

ordinary sense of the word; cares only for his house, his wife, his cattle and his skin. His care for the last takes the form of excessive caution. Hates danger; has no spirit of chivalry: on the contrary, is inclined to laugh at it in his foreign partisans and his enemies—when they give him the chance. Ladysmith and Mafeking owed their safety only to the Boers' dislike to exposing themselves in the open, to sacrificing a few lives for an assured success. Nothing would have been easier than to capture those almost unfortified towns. And, in the early battles of the war, the least spirit of initiative might have changed the British defeats into irretrievable disasters."

Our military attaché with the Boer forces came back, I have since been told, holding the same views; there is, therefore, no reason to doubt their accuracy. And one remains more and more thoughtful before that campaign in which so many things—numbers, gold, the inferiority of the adversary—seemed to facilitate England's triumph, that campaign whose leaders, laden with ovations, grants and honours, enjoy the fruits of their reverses with calm, but dignified modesty, amid the homage of their fellow-citizens and the enthusiasm of their victims!

CHAPTER II

CORONATION TIME

I

Not a soul, this morning, in the undulating fields or in the brick cottages: the cows are left to look after themselves in the emerald meadows where Constable painted them; the huge town, like a heart filled with gladness, has absorbed all the people of England.

The appearance of London is changed: the streets are lined with improvised covered galleries, the houses masked with stands and with the cruel red cloth. It is undeniably ugly, but so dignified! What, after all, is imagination? A frivolous thing, an absence of conviction, the luxury of sceptics. The uniform plan of these festoons of flowers and vegetable matter, the poverty of invention that arranges these lamps so as to form two inevitable initials: such things as these mark the triumph of the strenuous barbarism of the races to whom the future belongs.

2

One would never know this for a London Sunday. A compact crowd floods the squares, the streets, the bridges, a crowd which the showers drive to take shelter under the half-finished timber-work, from whose scarlet calico pink rivulets trickle down upon umbrellas that refuse to be discouraged. It is a serious crowd, controlled by the persuasive police, and it collects on the pavements loafers of every quality, their noses upturned towards the bedizened house-fronts: bank clerks in dominical frock-coats; workmen looking like gentlemen with us, only more so, save for their hands, which are too red, and the mangled finger-nails with which they press down the bowls of their short pipes; costermongers in brown jackets with mother-o'-pearl buttons, who have come from incredible suburbs accompanied by Perditas marvellously attired in those extraordinary feathered hats which almost correspond with the cap of our late grisettes and invariably crown the head of Cockney beauty.

3

A flock of carriages follows closely, one upon the other, like sheep, around the refuges, divides at the barriers, under the unfinished triumphal arches. Here are aristocratic landaus, enormous sea-shells

swung on the springs which we are beginning to discard in favour of pneumatic tyres, and ladies, from the height of their cushions swinging like hammocks, look down with a kindly air upon the good-humoured populace, which, in this logical country, sees them pass as a natural manifestation of the national tradition, strength and luxury and shows no jealousy, but rather pride and gratitude, as at the sight of the shade and beauty of a fine tree in a park. Down to the brawling crew of that cart in which a great jug of beer passes round from mouth to mouth, all show a certain deference to the aristocratic turn-out. And, in general, the whole procession makes its way soberly; noisy passages are the exception; and the crowd does not echo the shouts that frighten the lean nag from Bayswater or Upper Tooting, which, with a mixture of shyness and snobbery, ventures to intrude its plebeian hoof between the house-fronts of Pall Mall.

The omnibuses have doubled and trebled their fares. Their tops are full. Enormous brakes drive about crammed with Hindu soldiers. They make a display of white teeth and regular features. One easily knows them for Sikhs by their faces and turbans. I may have seen them swim, wearing an iron bracelet, their long hair dragging upon the torpid water, in the sacred tank of Amritsar, near Lahore, where, on a marble island platform, a gilded temple guards the book of their faith. . . .

4

What shall I say of the decoration of the streets? It is not, perhaps, thus that the contemporaries of Pericles would have contrived to adorn the road to the Panathenæa; but, nevertheless, one cannot deny certain happy inspirations, if it were only, before all, that of setting up gigantic stands in front of all the public buildings in London, including Westminster Abbey, which is almost entirely hidden behind a colossal stand of peculiarly aggressive size and hideousness, which, however, cannot fail to bring in an excellent profit to its builder! The National Gallery bashfully raises the sinister pepper-box that serves as its dome behind a Leviathan scaffolding. Alone, in the middle of Trafalgar Square, Nelson's column rises unadorned. At its feet, street-urchins sail their paper boats on the water of the stone fountains, as in the picture of *Dido building Carthage*: a pretty symbol, by which we can allow ourselves to be moved, after Ruskin. Let us hope that the noble pillar, guarded by its watchful lions, will not be rolled up in some untoward ornament: the last ode of the Poet Laureate, a humorist suggests! . . .

5

The artistic elect of London are generally pleased with the Canadian triumphal arch that stands before

the palace of Whitehall, almost on the spot where Charles I. was beheaded: other times, other manners. This monument, the inscription on which runs, "CANADA, BRITAIN'S GRANARY," seems determined, fiercely determined to justify the metaphor. We here see wheat-sheaves, bristling spikes of corn, among red draperies with yellow fringes; grain under glass framed with artificial roses; heads of domestic animals; harrows, ploughshares and even coloured photographs. The more numerous the ingredients, the more successful the result: plum-pudding æsthetics, in short.

6

The whole of St. James's Street is one great bower of green garlands and triumphal lettuces, from which hang stuffed doves, an engaging and peaceful emblem. And then there are paper lanterns and celluloid lanterns, transparencies and streamers and Venetian masts and awnings, flags and pennants, red canopies with yellow rosettes and yellow canopies with green rosettes, tricolor balconies, lions rampant, harps, thistles and feathers, Corinthian capitals whose unkempt acanthus-leaves spread with a bewildered air at the top of their shafts swathed in scarlet cotton, lacquered, stucco and painted inscriptions screaming with loyalty, zinc flowers, glass jars, plaster busts, gilt cardboard elephant-heads: all these things will see the passing

of Edward the Well-beloved when he goes to be crowned.

7

The smart thing, during these last nights in London, has been to go to see the illuminations on the top of an omnibus hired for the occasion, or else on a coach with only two horses: even that was dangerous in this packed crowd. O good, peaceful English crowd, restrained and swayed by the Bobby, the chaste, frugal, gentle Bobby under the black dome of his helmet!

From the top of the coach, which is stopped by the block in Piccadilly, where the carriages form stationary islands in the stream of humanity (the rate of progress is ten yards in half an hour), we bow and call out to our friends on the pavements, in the balconies or on the different conveyances: the men in dress-clothes, the ladies in dinner-dress under their wraps. An admiral is driving: as a young midshipman, he never went to sea without his tandem harness. We pass under the windows of the old Baroness, whose house, draped from top to bottom in cretonne imitating Flemish tapestry, receives a popular ovation: she bows her thanks from the balcony. She looks like a little old portrait of 1855, but her young husband appears infinitely more modern.

The illuminations, like the decorations and the processions, are anywise, without the smallest sense of harmonious effect. And yet there was room for ideas

in this branch of decorative art! Why did they not revive the allegories of olden time, so charming in their pedantic grace? Good Queen Bess was escorted to her coronation by Time and Truth, without counting the giants Gog and Magog, the traditional guardians of the City. When she reached the church, she still held in her hand a sprig of rosemary which an old woman had given her as she crossed the Thames. The incident has its charm, when one thinks of the terrible red woman, seated on her hack, with strings of pearls in her sandy hair, of the fierce flirt, who used an axe-head for a mirror and in whose cupboards, at her death, were found—O prodigious frippery of an ill-loved old fairy!—twelve hundred gowns of brocade and cloth of gold.

8

Alexandra Palace is a sort of Crystal Palace, a fair in a great hot-house. A camp of tents in the surrounding gardens shelters the most incongruous collection of heroes imaginable.

The New-Zealanders, magnificent specimens of vigorous, solid, serious animals, realize curiously a type of southern Scot, bigger, heavier, but with the same characteristics of at times fanatical gravity and at times ponderous intentness. They smack with their riding-whips the leather leggings that mark the shape of their sturdy limbs; one of them confesses to me, with puritanical sincerity, that two things in

London disgust him: the women and the public-houses.

Meanwhile, gallant Canadians are pouring out tea, under the trees, for their young kinswomen. I wonder if my friend Thibault, surname Léveillé (an amusing name for an English soldier!), who, at the time of the Diamond Jubilee, told me the latest gossip of Montreal in a French full of turns of the days of Jacques Cartier, is back again this year? Or, do those Maoris take his place, or those Fijians with their bristling, whitewashed hair, with their bare legs under their little white calico kilts? Which of their senses, I wonder, is most excited by the appearance of the fresh and succulent young Englishwomen, which mucous membrane most lustily stirred at the sight of those appetizing flesh-colours? For, down yonder, on the shores of the coral gulfs, under the scented creepers, they have tasted, on festive occasions, the classic fare of their banquets, ' long pig," which is their name for man. . . .

The Cypriotes, in their becoming tarbooshes, parade their oriental self-sufficiency and their aquiline noses with the thin nostrils,

. . . flairant étamine ou pistil.

The negroes we no longer count. Most of them belong to those tribes of athletic Africans, those same marvellous fighting-brutes whom our own officers have told me that they have seen spar with one another for a pipe of tobacco under the enemy's fire at four hundred yards. And, wounded to the death,

slashed to pieces, on the litter that bore them from the field they sang, in a hoarse voice, a savage, improvised hymn to the glory of the officer-boy from Saint-Cyr who had led them there to die for an impossible country and an unknown Loubet. . . .

9

Never was stage effect led up to with more perfect art and care than the news that burst this afternoon over thunder-struck London. One has not even the courage to reproach fate with her too easy blows: the catastrophe descends, totally unforeseen, at the culminating moment of the play.

The scene passes in an immense dining-room, hung with admirable Gobelins after Coypel. The French windows look out over terraces, pieces of water, lawns, a great park of seventy acres in the heart of London. There are two tables: at one, the mistress of the house has the Grand-duke of Hesse on her right, an empty chair on her left; at the other, the host is seated beside the Duchess of Connaught and the princesses, her daughters. The conversation, made up of commonplaces, lags, weighed down by I know not what dull anxiety, which is certainly more or less clearly defined according to the degree of initiation of each guest.

Suddenly, a footman bows to whisper to the host, who rises, goes out and returns a moment after, ushering in the Duke of Connaught, pale, in a

general's uniform, bringing the news: the coronation is postponed!

To his preoccupations as a family-man and a model brother is added the care of 59,000 soldiers to provide for. No smaller a number has come to these rejoicings, which a brutal destiny countermands. Scraps of conversation are uttered in awe-struck accents:

"Perityphlitis. . . ."

"No, appendicitis. . . ."

"There was no question of anything, two months ago, at least!"

"Oh, forty-eight hours ago, nobody could have said for certain. . . ."

"Nobody. . . ."

"And to think that Granier told me so in Paris! . . ."

The same broken phrases (it reminds one of passages in Saint-Simon: "Madame arrived screaming. . . .") are continued in the loveliest gardens in the world: Italian flower-beds, Dutch summer-houses, Shakspearean groves, statues, fountains and hedges where lurks the unexpected grace of a rockery, or a Japanese bridge, or a Chinese lantern. . . .

10

Meanwhile, the imminent arrival is announced, for three o'clock this afternoon at Victoria Station, of His Majesty Bai Faruna, King of Kawia, on the Gold Coast. . . .

II

But the real pathos of the situation is not revealed until we enter the swarming streets outside, gaudy with shields and banners which will not be used, and one must needs feel an emotion of deep sympathy for this great people, at the sight of the peculiar eloquence that now attaches to the inscription a thousand times repeated on the house-fronts and triumphal arches:

"GOD SAVE THE KING!"

CHAPTER III

THE WALLACE COLLECTION

I

I do not think that any private collection can be compared with the bequest of the late mistress of Bagatelle. No public museum even surpasses the Wallace collection in certain branches: the French masters of the eighteenth century, the works of Francesco Guardi, the Sèvres porcelain, the seventeenth and eighteenth-century furniture.

The visitor hesitates to make a choice. It sounds incredible, but there are, so to speak, almost no indifferent works at Hertford House. At the most, one might mention some rather dowdy pictures by Camille Roqueplan, about which Sir Richard Wallace was at one time bantered by M. Rochefort. But what marvels are here! Fragonard's *Fair-haired Child* would justify the phrase which Reynolds applied to his own *Strawberry Girl*, another gem in the same collection, when he described it as "one of the half-dozen original things which no man ever exceeded in his life-work." No engraving, no copy will ever reproduce the dazzling freshness of those

bright colours, the white of the dress, the rose of the cheeks, the blue of the eyes, the light gold of the hair, all brought together, without fear of insipidity, by the happy daring of genius.

The charming libertinism of *The Swing* attracts the public more. Old maids, haloed with innocence, stand long before the famous little masterpiece. They think it very "French:" that word explains, conciliates, and absolves. They knew what they were going to see. When one goes to France or to look at French things, one is prepared. The expression "shocking" implies a shock.

Greuze, who is better represented here than at the Louvre or any other museum, never painted anything more successful than this portrait of *Sophie Arnould*, the lady who "made so little of it." Nor can we doubt, when we look at that voluptuous and smiling face, that "they liked it."

Other portraits of persons famed for their fierce virtue are the *Marquise de Pompadour*, by Boucher, and Lancret's *Mademoiselle Camargo dancing*. A Camargo in hoops and patches is dancing in a wood, to the sound of an orchestra hidden among the trees. Here is the madrigal which M. l'Abbé de Voisenon scribbled for the goddess of the Opera on the marble table of the pastry-cook at Cauterets, between two of the croquettes which he doted on:

Aimable Camargo, ta danse a plus d'appas
Loin de la foule, au fond de rustique bocage,
Mais Pan rôde la-bàs, son œil brille, je gage;
Piquante nymphe, crains-tu pas
Un Dieu plus sensible que sage?

Ou bien sous le zéphir qui l'effleure au passage,
Ce beau sein rêve-t-il, las d'un timide hommage,
Aux baisers qu'on n'évite pas?

Of the nine Watteaus, one prefers especially *Gilles and his Family* and *The Fountain.* What witchcraft is it that rivets you before that little piece of canvas, where nothing happens, where two tiny figures turn round a bason as large as a silver coin in flagrantly conventional attitudes?

Let us take off our hats, in passing, to a fine *Portrait of a French Ecclesiastic* by Philippe de Champaigne and enter the great gallery that takes up the whole breadth of Hertford House. The Titian rediscovered by Mr. Claude Phillips * here reigns in state. Then there is a Cima da Conegliano, an exquisite saint, the sight of which awakens memories of hours, never to be forgotten and never to return, spent among the things of Venice, a pure work evoking a whole peaceful and gentle reign of beauty. A little further, on the same wall, but from the depths of another history, of another genius, although always laughing towards the same eternal ideal, rises *The Laughing Cavalier*, by Frans Hals. How he laughs! What triumphant joy! To be laid in a tomb and leave that laugh behind one is to cheat death. . . . Instinctively, you look for a word at the bottom of the frame. It seems, by some strange phenomenon, as if, before the eloquence of that face,

* In one of the bath-rooms of the house! The discovery does the greatest credit to the sympathetic scholar and artist that is the keeper of the Wallace collection.

you could not exist without knowing the name. Hals! Laces, sashes, the gleam of golden wine in the crystal of a tall glass, the succulence of a cut pasty, blue eyes, yellow beards, heroic strokes, an ample and sovereign elegance never disfigured by bombast, a glamorous execution, a grace that makes sport of difficulties, hand on hip, feather in cap, an inimitable look of ease and of smiling defiance, a nature as rich and less sad than his brothers in talent and masterly skill, Velasquez and Gainsborough.

More striking yet, perhaps, through an almost supernatural intensity of concentrated life, is Rembrandt's lordly portrait of *Suzanna van Collen, wife of Jan Pellicorne*. The old master of smoke and phosphorus, that brewer of ruddy darkness fraught with mysteries struggling to express themselves, to blaspheme or bemoan their fate, that visionary who exalts or bruises himself with his magnificent discipline has here found again the inspiration of tragic serenity to which we owe his portrait of *Elizabeth Bas*.

Not far from here hangs *The "Rainbow" Landscape*, in which Rubens has made the transfigured nature of Flanders throb with his richest fevers.

The English school on the end wall displays some of its most incontestable master-pieces. Reynolds and Gainsborough here vie with each other in their portraits of *Mrs. Robinson*. The second seems to show more uneasiness before the female model than did that mysterious Reynolds, whom Nelly O'Brien (see her pretty picture beside the other) loved all her

life in vain. Miss Siddons, on the other hand, the daughter of the great actress whose portrait he has left us, died of love for Lawrence. So great, at that time, was the fascination of the artist for women of taste.

Reynolds, to return to him, painted nothing more seductive than the full-length portrait of *Mrs. Rivett Carnac.* No one could give more life to the suppleness of that young body swathed in soft, white stuffs, that young body which is no longer virginal, but deliciously fashioned, in its chaste self-surrender, by the sacred acts of life. A narrow border of gold separates the flesh of the breast from the drapery of the body. A scarf falls from one shoulder, slips from around the waist, floats illusively. The head-dress of light feathers, one of which is pink, crowns the mass of ash-coloured hair, against a background of russet branches, in the royal magnificence of a northern September, with its twilights of purple skies and gilded mountain-tops.

What has become of the beauties of that time? Where are Lady Blessington, Lady Lincoln, Mrs. Nesbitt, the adorable Perdita, the large hats, the tall powdered heads, all that cycle of unparalleled and patrician grace, as remote from the more animal seductiveness of the women of the time of Charles II. as from the great elegant, but rather hard line of the fair Englishwomen of to-day? O mystery and melancholy! Handsome King George IV. (a little puffy for all that, flaxen-haired and bloated, with a complexion that suggests the little rose-whipped pos-

teriors of Tiepolo's cherubs) thrusts out perpetually to the edge of the frame in which Lawrence imprisoned him his shapely calf cased in dove-coloured silk; nothing remains of the dead graces that rustled around him. That charming world seems to have returned to dust, with the pleasures and pains that belonged to it. Henceforth, it is the prey of the poets, those jackals of sentiment. Certainly, they will find much to dream of in those vanished years which saw the friendships and the loves of mortals so incomparably charming as Lady Lincoln and that young Lee whom Lawrence painted and whose portrait M. Groult jealously keeps in custody, in his collection in Paris, for the exceeding delight of a select and enlightened few.

Then, to continue, here are pearly Guardis; two plentiful collections of Bonington and Decamps; the miniatures; a Blarenberghe that cost thirty thousand francs; a splendid allegorical and sensuous Pourbus, languishing with serene and pompous felicity; other marvels besides. . . .

2

Among the furniture are some of the most perfect models of the French eighteenth century that exist and the revelation of a gilt chandelier, chased by Caffieri, which bears witness how little was lacking to the Louis XV style to raise it from the domain of prettiness and frivolity to a superlative dignity of line.

Near the metal-work is a series of those portraits in wax, modelled in the sixteenth century, some of which are so strangely alive; pottery, glass, an abundance of treasures; after which we come upon the finest museum of arms and armour in the world. Coats of damaskeened steel, some shapeless and terrible, others, on admirably set-up figures, preserving the gracefulness of the virile outline; oriental arms, with hilts of jade and ivory strewn with precious stones, hilts too small for European hands, in which I find again the delicate, sumptuous and cruel forms which I admired in India, in the palace of the Maharajah of Alwar; culverins, pistols, dirks, morions, baselards: two-handed swords, daggers with cleft blades. . . . A Renascence knife holds the amazed attention: the blade is continued by a silver cloud which embraces a naked figure, doubtless Ixion, and, standing above the straining group of man and divine meteor of which the Centaurs are to be born, a graceful and unexpected statuette forms the pommel: Temperance, it appears, although she pours a little silver stream from the ewer which she raises with her right arm into the cup which her left hand holds. This signal and tiny master-piece, an enchantment of lines and curves in which lives all the creative fury (harmonious, in the apparent incoherency of the myths and attributes, by dint of sheer joyousness and transport) that tortured the Tuscan Renascence, comes, Mr. Phillips assures me, from Verrocchio's workshop.

3

London may well be proud of this museum, both for the works which it contains and the manner in which they are shown to the best advantage. Our national museums could here easily learn some lessons of taste—and, shall I say, of integrity?

CHAPTER IV

SOCIETY—SUPPERS—SPORT

I

SHE was charming, a little nervous among the orchids, this versatile widow, who edits a luxurious review, nurses the wounded, rushes off to South Africa at duty's summons and finds time to get married when it is love that calls. The groom, who did not seem greatly put out by his family's absence, looked magnificent and reminded one of his sister, the dazzling Princess of ——, a beauty lustrous to the point of indiscretion and a little too animated, they say, for her august, conventional, mediatized German family-in-law.

To return to the wedding: it was marked by no shrinking privacy. No young innocence could have surrendered itself with greater candour. The bride's family was very well represented, with, in the front pew, the dowager duchess, who would have chosen her time badly had she forsaken her sister-in-law then; and the bride's son (a very harmonious phrase), the famous war-correspondent, besides many lords of greater or lesser importance, whose

faces assumed very comic expressions, ladies screwing up their eyes to show how greatly they were touched by the romance of it all, men who seemed on the point of proclaiming from the summit of their stand-up collars the imprescriptible rights of love over social convention. The moral of all this? The old axiom of Theleme: "*Fais ce que vouldras.*" But upon one condition: that you do not lose sight of style. Style is everything. Style is the harmonious dispensing of elements which, on analysis, resolve into nothing.

In conclusion, two very characteristic features: instead of each giving separately the traditional asparagus-tongs or set of silver-gilt spoons, a dozen well-to-do persons have clubbed together to present the bride with a diamond tiara. But the new Mrs. —— will not wear it just yet: the young couple are off on their honeymoon—to the Transvaal! He is going to fight, she to look after her hospitals. Gunpowder, iodoform, the rock-stained veldt, white beds under the yellow lamp, adventure, pain, glory; a curious and powerful exaltation of sensibility which, after all, is as good as the beadles and *pifferari* of the days when our grandmothers travelled no farther than Sorrento.

2

We are at the Covent Garden Opera. The feast for the eyes is not brilliant to-night in a house plunged in darkness by the Wagnerian rite. They

are playing *Das Rheingold*. Through the semi-gloaming, we vaguely distinguish the boxes. Above us is the Princess of Wales, motionless, accompanied by the Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein (whose husband, if I be not mistaken, was that evening restoring the æsthetic equilibrium of the family by seeing *A Runaway Girl* at the Gaiety). In a box opposite, the anxious and disconcerted eye looks in vain to-night for Lady de G——.

Here is Lady C—— B——, one of the pillars of the temple, and with her Lady G——, slender and exquisite, the author of dainty drawings and "expressive portraits," which Burne-Jones might have envied. Very simply dressed, with no tiara nor even a wreath of leaves in her hair (the ladies are wearing their heads largely in the druid style, in London, this season), is she, who, at one of the drawing-rooms of late years, appeared in the same dress which her husband's ancestress, the beautiful Duchess of R——, wore at her wedding in 1775, white and gold brocade strewn with roses, and on her head a coronet of wonderful diamonds that once belonged to Nell Gwyn, the favourite of Charles II. Shall we not hope one day at the Élysée to see the Comtesse G—— in one of those tunics with which Madame Tallien used to dazzle the "balls of victims" of 1790?

Here also is the Marquise d'——, an Englishwoman by birth, whose husband brought her one of the greatest names in Auvergne. An elegant woman, of the most assured elegance, she defies all competition. She could be nothing else, one realizes that;

and, if, by chance, one dark day, an event of any sort should compel her to some merely middle-class course, one feels that it would be done with her, that henceforth she would drag on only a languid and unprized life: Prince Rupert's drops crumble to powder if you break their delicate stems: Very fair, by dint of living with the Queen she has ended by resembling Her Majesty and the whole series of English royal highnesses, whose clear-cut type can be recognized a hundred miles away.

3

At the supper that followed, actors and many members of the audience met under a roof that is always hospitable to artists, a roof of a kind of which there are many more in London than in Paris. Nothing is more typical than this mingling, in England, of people in society with people on the stage. Shakspeare undoubtedly rehabilitated the actor's profession there for good, which is more than Molière succeeded in doing in France. Why? I think that it is due, to some extent, to a superstitious respect for the ministers of a religion, art, which retains greater mysteries for a civilization of which it represents not the soul, the very life, as with us (who, for that matter, exaggerate its importance), but rather an expensive and cultured luxury. Discipline in admiration characterizes in the highest degree the average æsthetic notions of the English-

man, especially in music. Wagner's genius, once promoted to the rank of an accepted idea and confirmed by the patronage of the royal family, reigned thenceforth in all its glory. It is a question of snobbism (in the sense, applied to art, which we give to the word by extension) dignified by loyalty: another form of that hypocrisy which is so often laid at our neighbours' door and which none the less remains a social virtue of the highest order.

Be this as it may, a Frenchman will not find himself sitting without surprise between Lady ——, the mother of one of the noblest polo-players of the Bagatelle Club, who achieved distinction by introducing in Paris, in July, the fashion of wearing white duck trousers under a frock-coat, and Mrs. ——, the English Réjane, who is thinking of playing Zaza and, meanwhile, by the side of her husband, astounds with the piquancy of her facial play the spectators of Shakspeare's *Julius Cæsar*, marvellously revived.

The mistress of the house presides at the head of a table of Germans, all in beards and spectacles, excepting Mottl, who sits on her right.

The host, seated between Lady L—— and Lady R——, is full of stories of a trip to Norway for which he deserted his parliamentary duties for some days. Near us, Lady E—— displays her delicate beauty, immortalized by the famous quarrel with Whistler on the subject of a portrait, and Lady H—— B——, the belle of the season, sits smiling between the giant Fafnir and one of the heroes of

the Jameson raid. All this is neither commonplace nor Bohemian, but in perfect good taste and very amusing into the bargain.

Only, the supper is too good, if only because of the dressed-up dishes of the old school: "surprise" sandwiches that remind you of everything except sandwiches; ingenious disguises of clandestine eatables; dainties in dominoes. . . . And, withal, champagne drier than a speech by Mr. Chamberlain.

4

Supper at the Carlton, again after the Opera. Something of a rabble, with a less pronounced air of fashion than at our Ritz's (although with similar contrasts of niggers and princes of the Blood), whereas, at the Opera and, generally, at all the English theatres, the appearance of the house is always more brilliant than with us.

Quite close to our party, a lady dressed out in a sort of burnoose is bright blue with turquoises as big as macaroons: she suggests a camel-driver who has struck a mine. At the next table, the military attaché at Paris is entertaining some ladies, including Lady Maud W——, one of the Englishwomen in society who have a sincere love of music and who are to be seen in Paris listening to Palestrina at Saint-Gervais. There are also theatrical people, people of every sort, too many people. . . . A crowd clashes with one's sense of what is *chic*. It

lends itself to displays of picturesqueness, strength or magnificence, but *chic* has nothing to do, for the moment, with these excessive sentiments. It will come. This barbarous monosyllable, which arouses such different ideas, according to the brains which it reaches, is, after all, the lisping accent of a superior harmony, or, simply, an ideal that stammers its way through the ingenuousness and oddity of men's appetites and vanities.

5

Hurlingham. Imagine an enormous Puteaux, a space large enough to contain several Îles Rothschild, with polo-grounds, cricket-fields, tennis-courts, pigeon-shooting and the like. We have come to lunch here after the biannual meet of the Coaching Club and a score of heavy drags, filled with bright dresses and dark frock-coats, are drawn up, with their horses taken out, around the polo-ground. Ah, for how little we count, in the matter of open-air games, beside these people! During the polo-match, one of the players, who has already received a black eye from a mallet in the course of a furious mêlée of yellow boots, padded breeches, dripping jackets, haggard and shouting faces, stumbles, falls, with his pony on top of him, lies motionless. A cry comes from the next coach; a young girl gives signs of the greatest agitation: a sister, no doubt, or a weeping "intended." Some-one asks her, in a sympathetic voice:

"Do you know him?"

"Oh, yes, it's Captain So-and-so. If only it had been one of the hussars!" (The match is being played between a team of life-guards and one of hussars).

The player lies stretched, as though dead, and the girl refuses to be consoled and moans:

"Oh, how disappointed he will be!"

A rather pretty love-phrase, is it not?

6

I ponder, during this long afternoon, on the psychology of the sportsman. It is much less simple than one thinks. Sport, like travel, is something very close to action. What am I saying? It is pure action, freed from the tyranny of motive. Any motive that resists analysis must be either absurd or base. Every active conception of life has a share of imbecility. But action is an imperious need for certain choice natures. Let us act, therefore, but beware of having an object; let us display in all their harmony our vigour, our skill, the gifts which, did we deign to let them, would ensure us easy conquests: is sport anything else? The sages of the future will be oarsmen or bicyclists. For that matter, one of these days, there will be nothing else left to do: war will be as out of date as "pigeon-holes." The muscular age will create its own philosophy. The Greeks began in this way, but humanity,

at that glorious stage, had not yet issued from the battlesome phase. We are breaking out of it now. Let us then learn to honour the athlete. He has expanded in force and rhythm the faculties destined by naturè for criminal ends. Also, he is a poet.

CHAPTER V

SOME THEATRES

I

I BELIEVE that the art of the scene-painter has never realized anything to be compared with certain scenes in Shakspeare's *Twelfth Night*, as placed upon the stage by Mr. Tree. Nowhere, not in Paris, nor at Bayreuth, nor even in London, where Sir Henry Irving, nevertheless, obtained memorable results, has anything like it been done. To restore to the work its setting is a meritorious thing, but needs only some erudition and a little conscientiousness; on the other hand, to give it back its atmosphere, while striking the special note of the creative genius that peopled it with the phantoms of his imagination (especially if the play be enacted in the realms of fancy, in a shadowy duchy of Illyria, on the borderland of reality and dreams) is a task which demands a poet and in which the reconstructive artist is able to make himself the equal of the greatest.

From the lap of those wonderful, deep, spacious arm-chairs that compose the stalls, the spectator sees the stage behind an empty space beneath which

the orchestra lies hidden under a roof strewn with palm-leaves. This forms a sort of threshold decked for a feast. Beyond it, the great bay, which is closed, for very short intervals, by sumptuous purple curtains embroidered with royal crowns, opens generously upon fairyland.

Of the five scenes of the evening, three are quite remarkable. But the gardens of Olivia are a marvel. That hideous thing, the stage with its level boards, has disappeared. Three successive platforms form three uneven terraces covered with a carpet of long grass and joined by grass-grown steps. They are as it were three landings of the long, ascending walk that plunges into the blue distance shaded by masses of greenery. Rich clusters of flowering rhododendrons form an irregular border to it. On the left, a marble bridge strides over a valley of lawns and cascades. A carved bench, standing among camellias planted in the ground, and a close-clipped box hedge suggest the somewhat conventional grace of the sixteenth century and harmonize with Malvolio's huge, starched ruff and with the crimson satin farthingale in which Olivia will soon be walking over the mosses of the park. The book which she has just closed, with a flower to mark her place, has dropped to the ground near the bench. One feels that this is a favourite corner and the whole scene gives an impression of a fairy summer, of ample leisure, of pleasing grace, of a landscape eminently suited to the maddest adventures of poetry and love.

The groups herein contained, the beautiful dresses,

by Mr. Percy Anderson, are arranged with a scrupulous taste and decorative feeling that remind one of Watteau in his *Embarquement pour Cythère*. And one perceives a constant happy solution of the problem of filling that immense stage with so slight an action, with such subtile emotions, with such fleeting charms.

The actor has succeeded in causing to stand out, in surprising relief, against this dreamy, pastoral background the amazingly whimsical creation which he has made of Malvolio, the puritanical, vain, formal, pedantic steward whose mystification, driven to the point of cruelty, constitutes one of the motives of the comedy. His very outline is an inspiration, from his bald head, with its three aggressive whisps of hair, the comma-shaped tuft on his chin, the picturesque line of his lean legs, as expressive in their way as the world-famed hands of Sir Henry Irving, down to the long white wand with which he orders and regulates the evolutions of the servants of Olivia's household with a dancing-master's stiff and comical precision. He is the true image of ceremony, etiquette and ritual, of that scholastic rigidity of the middle-ages which the supple, voluble, laughter-loving sixteenth century hated, a sort of Tartuffe, grotesque without being odious, an incarnation of superciliousness, pompousness, dryness and artificiality that has something of Carlyle's Dryasdust and something of Don Quixote. For he preserves a certain dignity in spite of all and the actor has understood the fine genius for human pity of the

great creators. Malvolio's blind and persistent love for Olivia, like that of Don Quixote for Dulcinea, approaches the emotional and the beautiful.

We talk with Mr. Tree of these and many other things, after the performance, while he is doffing Malvolio's garb. He says some excellent things about the play in France. And then, suddenly, revealing one of those cases of inadaptability of vision which are inevitable, but always surprising, in a foreigner, he condemns the immorality of the Paris stage and quotes—the Théâtre Réaliste! This evidently represents to him a type; and I have great difficulty in explaining that this enterprise never enjoyed either notoriety or a public. Why is it that to people of this intelligent stamp the name of Paris but too often suggests the same associations as to an Anglo-Indian subaltern or to one of Offenbach's South-Americans?

2

To mention another theatrical impression, I have a pleasant memory of my evening at the Avenue, where they gave a sort of English *Nouveau jeu* called *Lord and Lady Algy*. It is not a study—the word is too serious—but a cursory glimpse of the fast, sporting world, which is not without dash. A young couple break apart and come together again amid the ingenuous action of a good-humoured plot. A determined boldness of situation, if not of language, and a sort of easy gaiety have made a success of this slight

work, from which all true observation seems to have been carefully banished. A very characteristic scene ends the last act and never fails to make its effect. Lord Algy arrives at a fancy-dress ball drunk, but desperately drunk: as drunk as a lord, to use the national phrase. The others turn their backs upon him because of a misunderstanding and, in the midst of the general affront offered to him (his very jockey, whom he has brought with him disguised as Prince Charles Stuart, deserts him at that moment: he, too, for that matter, is drunk), his wife, from whom he has been living almost separated, chivalrously and publicly takes his part in these words:

"Come along, Algy dear, I'll get you a cab."

Fairly English, is it not?

3

The Little Minister shows a delicate observation of the rustic centres of Presbyterian Scotland. That is a charming scene where, in their Sunday clothes, before going to the little kirk whose windows gleam at the back of the stage, the elders of the village read the love-lines which they have discovered on the table of the manse and discuss by moonlight the recall of the boy minister whom they adore and who loves a gipsy. Fortunately, this gipsy is none other than the daughter of the laird and all is arranged, of course.

Another piece by the same author, Mr. J. M. Barrie,

one of the most justly popular English playwrights, supplies a remarkable document on the profound sense of inequality which is one of the social forces of England. *The Admirable Crichton* is the story of a butler in the service of a radical peer who is wrecked, together with his family and servants, in the course of a yachting-trip. Through the change of circumstances, Crichton, who is endowed with superior faculties, attains to a sort of autocracy in the little social group that has formed on the desert island. He reveals powers of organization and conquest and is on the point of marrying the daughter of the old peer, who, in his turn, has soon been relegated to the lowest rank of social usefulness, when a ship passes and takes the exiles back to their country. In the last act, the great man has once more become the perfect butler, automatically resumes his rank in the all-powerful hierarchy of caste and ultimately settles down in "a little public-house, my lord, in the Harrow Road—the more fashionable end."

The first act is delightful and the whole constitutes a most instructive study of the English soul. Certainly, they are right who call the theatre the mirror of manners. An exhaustive study of the dramatic art of a people would supply the place of all the rest.

4

I am also sent to see a piece played, rather heavily, by Mr. Lewis Waller: *Monsieur Beaucaire.* Another

feature of the English character is revealed in this work, which, from the artistic point of view, is crude and childish. The hero, who is a Frenchman, is always cutting a fine figure and this at the expense of the English, who are by turns hoaxed, tricked and beaten, at all of which the audience takes not the slightest umbrage. Imagine an Englishman in a similar position in a French play: he would not be endured. This feature of the English race has a dignity which we may well envy.

I should like to mention also the English musical comedy, not to speak of the pantomimes, both definite and original dramatic forms. The desultoriness of a plot with which logic and proportion have nothing to do, the mixture of absurdity and sentiment, the peculiarly pretty music and dancing, the beauty of the women, the richness of the dresses and scenery all go to make up spectacles very disconcerting to our Atticism, but having an incontestable charm. Nor have we the right to be particular, seeing that we possess that most abject of all entertainments, the *café-concert.*

5

To return to the drama in England, the general impression which one is apt to receive is that the plays are not written for grown-up people (we except, of course, works of superior merit, such as, for instance, the master-pieces of Mr. Pinero). The theatre in this country seems as it were a show for easily-

pleased schoolboys. The same remark covers the novels. In England, Jules Verne would have become a popular novelist for readers of every age (they have Rider Haggard to prove it). What these men of action want is a story, a plot, action, in short; they ask for nothing better than serial fiction. The study of mere manners sends them to sleep. Their greatest writers have clung to plots in their books: Thackeray, Stevenson, Meredith himself. They have had to do with a public that wishes to be amused with adventures and does not care a straw for psychology.

And, once that you are back in the street and walk down Pall Mall, where the great clubs send percolating through their blinds the silent light in which the evening papers rustle, you feel a great need to wring the necks of every theatrical manager in Paris, with only one or two exceptions. For you have learnt that it is possible to make of an evening at the play something approaching a pleasure. It is possible to reduce to a vanishing-point the functions of the rapacious or insolent box-keeper and to do away with her tips. It is possible to seat the spectator comfortably, with room to stretch out his legs without digging his knees into the back of the lady before him. It is possible virtually to abolish that plague, the entr'acte (notwithstanding the complicated stage-setting, which is infinitely more detailed and elaborate than ours); to begin at half-past eight and finish shortly after eleven. It is possible to place upon the boards a collection of

women who are neither ugly nor decrepit. It is possible, lastly, to achieve a stage-setting from which the action of the drama derives truth, emotion, poetry or grandeur, instead of losing, in the poverty and shabbiness of an antiquated convention, such grandeur, poetry, emotion or truth as the drama is capable of containing! Until now, M. Antoine alone has shown us some of these possibilities. His success has paid him. Why do the others not follow suit?

The charm of living is declining with us in a pronounced manner, is decreasing day by day. We no longer even know how to give a dance! One would console one's self for many things, presuming that one were resigned, at the thought that we are perishing gracefully, that we are paying attention to our dying words, that we shall at least leave a fair regret behind us. When, in the palace at the end of the mole of Alexandria, Antony and Cleopatra led the inimitable life, their mourning of all earthly hope was dignified by passion and beauty. But with us there is none of this, nothing but a general mediocrity, the Panbœotianism of which Renan speaks, a sordidness, an ugliness that spare nothing. Our clever men are not clever enough and our men of action too clever.

CHAPTER VI

SOME HOUSES—THE THAMES

I

It is not a paradox to declare that the cult of the home, that eminently British characteristic (to judge by the current stereotypes), does not prevent the Englishman from throwing open his house or letting it pass into the hands of strangers much more readily than the Frenchman and, still more, the Italian or the Spaniard. Before you have left cards, in fact the first time that he sees you, the Saxon's hospitable instincts bring to his lips the classic "Come and lunch." In France, the least invitation counts as a mark of peculiar amiability. In Italy, they hardly ever invite you to a meal, although they accept one gladly from you, oh, only so as not to appear to look down upon the ways of those worthy *forestieri!* I shall always remember the story of the greatest nobleman in Florence inviting a German of equal birth to his own, who had been particularly recommended to him, *to take coffee after lunch*, in order that they might afterwards go through the collections contained within the hewn masonry of the old palazzo.

On the other hand, it is quite usual, in England, to let an historic castle to some American or other, a thing almost unheard-of with us, although, to tell the truth, in Italy, most of the old palaces are occupied, at least partially, by tenants:

"*Ma chè! . . . È tutto per bisogno!*"

How are we to judge these different shades of hospitality and respect for the home? Are we to say that the Englishman is the more hospitable? It would, on the whole, be difficult to maintain the opposite. And yet one might infer, in the Frenchman, a refinement of that politeness which looks upon the giving of an invitation not as an honour offered, but as an honour received, from which a privilege accrues to the host and not to the guest: it is a favour which may be only discreetly asked and which it would be in bad taste to beg before one is able to foresee the acceptance of one's request. But the envious rudeness of our republican manners has long ago done away with such scruples as these. No, let the foreigners be reassured: if they are not more frequently entertained, it is through shortness of comprehension, lack of curiosity or stinginess alone.

We are punished for it by the false notions which they very properly conceive of a private life which they are never invited to admire. The French family, that model of the homely virtues, which Greuze and Berquin revealed, in their most touching aspect, more than a century ago, represents, in the eyes of a public brought up on the 3*fr.* 50

novel, only an institution for the convenient practice of the domestic vices. As for Paris, its visitors know that its heart beats at the Moulin Rouge and that its attractions in the matter of naughtiness are beyond compare. The serious investigators, for their part, instal themselves in the Latin Quarter: there is quite a school of young novelists and old ones too that has pitched its tent among our future druggists and pettifoggers and sat down to rewrite Mürger and the follies and sentimentalities, now both out of date, of *La Vie de Bohême*. When those writers venture to describe the familiar surroundings of our middle or upper classes, one obtains results as comical as those of *The Visits of Elizabeth*, for instance, in which country-house life in Normandy appeared as it were distorted through the imagination of some writer of burlesques in the moon.

It is true that, if we ventured upon a picture of country-house life in England, it would perhaps be quite as funny. M. Bourget himself, who would have invented it, has not dared to go so far.

To tell the truth, one does not begin to know people until one has passed through their hall-doors. The home is as significant a part of the individual as the shell is of the mollusk. Let me take the intelligent and curious reader through a few English houses selected at random. The excursion may prove instructive.

2

Holland House. *Who's Who* gives the number of acres possessed by the noble owner of this unequalled residence: the figure must be taken to include the seventy acres of park which, in the middle of London, amid its secular oaks and its lawns broad as moors, isolate the old mansion that has witnessed so much of the country's history and is rich in so many memories.

Here is a peculiarity of this country: the alluviums of the past have been deposited without confusion, no violent convulsion has mingled their successive layers; the work of man has grown like the work of the soil, each season of history has helped towards this end by fruitful harvests or new crops; one can follow the development of the group of mankind that has had its cradles and its tombs in this island without being baffled by gaps or cataclysms. In a given residence, for instance, to the main building, in the Tudor style, have been added wings of the time of the Stuarts; next, the Dutch influences that came over with the house of Nassau have flung over the whole the somewhat clumsy good-humour of their heavily-rounded balusters or of their escutcheons of grey stone corroded by the fogs.

Certainly, this splendid house has not the dignity of proportion and line of a building by Palladio. These northern skies do not invite the pure outlines of marble to the nuptials of the sunlight and the

blue. The undeniable sense of charm that escapes from these crumbling bricks, these dark creepers, these carvings resembling those of a Flemish chest more nearly approaches that which we experience in the presence of the captivating bad taste of a Monplaisir, a Franconian or Würtemberg Hermitage than the emotion produced by the façade or the cortile of a Sienese or Vicentian palazzo.

But where else in the world shall we find a collection of marvels so homogeneous as that which crowds the rooms of the old abode of Fox? It is a constant collaboration of artistic interest with historical emotion: this master-piece by Reynolds represents a scene the actors in which lived under this roof; in this immense oak-panelled, book-lined gallery hangs an engraving which shows the room as it was two hundred years ago; that dressing-room was decorated for the purpose of a ball given in honour of Charles I.; here is the card-table, in Florentine pietradura, at which Fox played. And in the glass cases are a thousand priceless nicknacks and keepsakes, relics of Mary Stuart and Napoleon, tokens of august visits and interviews.

All this past is revealed in the voice of the master of the house, than whom one could have no better guide; and the intoxication of history is exhaled on every side. It accompanies you even to the gardens, which are quite admirable: French flower-beds, Flemish box hedges, leafy Italian arcades; an mmense room, orangery and ball-room in one, whos e tarnished mirrors remember Brummel's last necktie;

retreats in which marble slabs perpetuate the memory and the preference of some dead poet or parliamentary figure; fountains, basons, statues, clusters of old trees; horizons of greenery that deaden the murmur of the huge metropolis, the deferential sentry of an aristocratic and sumptuous leisure. . . .

No, I do not think that any other country could show the like of such a residence. In Poland, at the castles of some of the great nobles, each guest has his own pavilion, his own horses, servants and the rest. But could we hope to find there this supreme luxury of the past, of uninterrupted tradition, perpetuated by the works of fidelity and beauty of a civilization worthy of the name?

With us, the revolutions have left nothing of this kind standing. Our old residences, sacked or rebuilt, have all changed hands. And which of them could compare as a town-mansion with Holland House? La Muette, the first of which one thinks, would look like a cottage beside it. . . . I see hardly anything except the Park of Sceaux, so close to Paris, of which Versailles envies the glorious elm hedges, green walls fifteen feet high, hollowed out with shady niches for nymphs and gods. . . . And even there the Duchesse de Maine's château was destroyed during the Terror.

3

Whereas with us, on the Seine, all that has to do with boating assumes a low and more or less shop-

walking character, the case is just the opposite on the Thames. A man has his country-house on the water's edge, asks a party down from Saturday to Monday (London being impossible on Sundays) and all in very good style. The house is simple, often displaying a refined rusticity. Its luxury lies in the beautifully-kept lawn that slopes down to the bank, the earth of which is protected by a wooden wall. Beside the landing-stage is the round-roofed boat-house, covered with creepers. It shelters the light-oared skiffs, the soft-cushioned punt, the electric or steam launch. A willow droops its boughs to the water level. Tall trees grow in clusters, with flowers at their foot. The garden-chairs stand crowded round the tea-table. The men and women, in light clothes, roam about the walks at will. Every one is free: the host has not that look which he would be sure to wear in France, the look of a hen that has been sitting on a brood of ducklings. And this has its undoubted charm.

A man of taste will succeed in achieving in this order of things a master-piece of installation at once countrified and artistic. I have been spending Sunday and the Bank Holiday after in an exquisite cottage near Bray, between Windsor and Maidenhead. Standing on a backwater of the Thames, opposite Monkey Island, where the rain has pitilessly soaked the tents of a camp similar to many pitched along the river, the house, with its wooden gables, wreathes its porch in roses and wellingtonias. Inside reign gleaming chintzes, flowered cretonnes,

a dainty wealth of old china and silver, an apparently careless, but really laboured refinement of comfort, the most studied artlessness. In front of the house is a flower-garden in the old Flemish style, with clipped yews in boxes, straight and formal walks and, in the middle of a trim and demure lawn, an old gilt sun-dial on a stone plinth. Further away, at the end of a long arbour of ivy, stands an isolated music-room, furnished in the quaintest style: old Dutch settles, bought during a trip to Zealand and Friesland, painted chairs, with a sea-piece on each rail of the back, heavy arm-chairs, like those in Pieter de Hooch's interiors, made for copious slumbers after mighty feasts. A lantern inspired by the Chinese lanterns, with a landscape on each of its parchment panes, hangs from the wooden ceiling; and the red-brick stove is adorned with gleaming brasses, skimmers, pans, snuffers, arranged along the edge of the mantel of the fire-place with its black fire-dogs. But for the ottomans, the grand piano, the portrait of Wagner in a carved oak frame, one would think one's self at Zutphen or Groningen.

The village, a mile away, is very English, on the contrary, although quite as old-fashioned and charmingly decorative: a flint church, four centuries old, standing in the middle of the grave-yard where the grave-digger has his house; narrow streets with overhanging eaves of the time of Charles I. and little leaded window-panes; a hospital adorned with a statue of the founder, over a commemorative tablet, built with the infinite charm of the late Gothic style;

the clipped box hedges form a soft contrast with the bricks of the walls edged with white stone and the whole retains that distinctive mark of old things on English soil: a look of age that is not decrepit. The same thoughts that made them spring from the ground have remained familiar and sacred to the race which they have faithfully sheltered, Yonder, on the horizon, the Round Tower or keep of Windsor Castle looks new and carries with unbent brow the silken standard that tells us that the King is there. Where have I seen this poetic alms-house before? Yes, I remember: it forms the scene of Fred Walker's picture, that melancholy *Harbour of Refuge*, bathed in the golden light of the sun setting on the foreheads of life's victims.

It is drawing near evening and I am taken along the graceful river to Maidenhead, with perhaps the prettiest bridge in the neighbourhood of London. The pale sky is filled with subtile rays; all things are bathed in a cool, transparent light. The house-boats along the banks display their flower-clad roofs and jostle one another under the drooping foliage of the river-side beeches. Skiffs pass us, impelled by vigorous arms. The little hotels of the town look like pious foundations for tennis-players and oarsmen; the locks fill with boats crowded together, whose occupants watch one another discreetly and silently. And, among the great rain-clouds, the setting sun seems to be forging copper rainbows on a golden anvil.

4

We French have nothing between the castle and the suburban villa: we do not know how to live in the country, when we do not dwell there permanently, except in pomp and state or rusticating.

The English have the country-house. This is not the aristocratic seat, with its immense grounds, its endless swards with herds of belling deer, where the dying sun sets fire to the tall windows and gilds the pompous statues of the Jacobean frontals, but a roomy house, of almost affected simplicity (I do not speak of the many villas on the banks of the Thames, which sometimes reveal—O delightful epithet!—a "meretricious" taste), with comfortable furniture, old oak, bright cretonnes, cool and shiny chintzes printed with great bunches of roses, so perfectly adapted to the afternoon naps of summer.

The real luxury is the garden. There, a charming imagination gives itself free scope. How stiff is still our notion of the English garden! Here, the love of nature is more direct, more observant. They love her very wildness, they even suggest it, at times. For instance, in the botanic gardens at Kew, I have seen a seed-plot of poppies in the midst of prickly broom! Thus is an underwood furnished. We have no idea of any such studied simplicity.

The Dutch garden, with its box cut into the semblance of beasts and birds and the formality of its flagged walks; the Italian garden, where, in the

rosaries, some semi-circular stone bench bears an inscription such as:

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may;

the rock-garden, filled with dainty ferns and tough little mountain plants; the Japanese garden, watered by a slow brook where one steps on flat stones placed at intervals among the irises and gladioli, while a stone perfume-burner outlines its curious shape against the cunningly-shaded backgrounds of maple and bamboo and a bronze toad, squatting at the edge of an oblong pond, watches the reflection of the moon: all this forms a real epitome of the art of gardens.

Amid this variety, which does not exclude the indispensable croquet-lawn and tennis-court, the guests move about according to their fancy, free to roam alone or to pair off as they will, without being pursued by a panting hostess eager to "amuse" them whether they wish it or no, as happens among us, who are a people too unaccustomed to hospitality not to conceive an exaggerated notion of its duties.

5

The river laps gently against the tarred planks that contain its banks. Here are lawns so trimly mowed that, as you row past, you feel inclined to pat them with your hand, affectionately, like the back of a good green poodle. The thick grass

grows to the top of the black planks. Clusters of bright flowering plants run to the foot of the veranda of the low houses, all different in shape and structure under their ivy or virginia-creepers and yet all resembling one another.

The Thames is not here the muddy and mighty estuary laden with colliers, torn by the stems of the tugs, bestridden by bridges flying high above the masts of the ships, but an easy-going nymph, bringing from its native meadows careless memories of hills and pastures, of sheep round as balls, of Gothic colleges and Norman towers. It loses a little of its rusticity in this mundane valley through which it flows between Maidenhead and Windsor.

Towering at some height above it, on one of the few eminences in this hardly undulating landscape, amidst the trees of an extensive park stands Clieveden, purchased by a superlatively rich American from the late Duke of Westminster. It is a very large villa in the Italian style, having nothing in common with the old manors of Scotland or Wales, with their moats, their battlements of the Tudor times, their dark towers and their haunted rooms (oh, what fine ghost-stories they know in this country!). The terrace that stretches in front of the house is bordered by a magnificent stone Renascence balustrade, where recessed benches stand here and there on their pedestals of handsome sculptured vases. This balustrade has a rather mysterious legend attached to it. It is supposed to be a copy of that which adorns one of the most famous Roman villas. They declare that

it was the original that left Italy and a copy that is now admired by the visitor over there. These are hard times!

Below it, flung like a carpet on a great smooth lawn, lies an Italian garden whose classic taste and disposition are amazed at the unexpected ornament of a number of huge Tuscan terra-cotta oil-jars, perched on stands too small for them, whose decorative fancifulness harmonizes as ill as may be with the chastened harmony of the whole scene. It is a flagrant piece of Americanism, as is the arrangement of that row of handsome Venetian pozzi, with their polished marble kerbs and storied bas-reliefs, at the foot of the terrace. The grace of the flowers that project beyond would be so charming any elsewhere than in that stiff decoration, so dignified in style and so proudly exacting!

But the park is admirable, in the rather wilful wildness of the broad walks that run down to the river. Sometimes, at a turn, an unexpected statue rises, like that colossal stone peer in court dress whose lordly eye looks down through the green boughs upon the embanked valley where the Thames, for a moment, assumes the appearance of an Irish lake.

6

Our electric launch is waiting for us at the landing-stage and, a little magically, without smoke, without visible effort, almost without noise, takes us to

the crowded lock. Numbers of boats jostle one another between the lock's green walls. Rows of people look down upon us from the banks. Men in flannel trousers stand at the head of their punts, pole in hand, or, seated in their skiffs, ship their oars and with one hand hold on to the chain that hangs along the wall, to save the boat from being swept away presently, when the lock fills. There is little talking. Women are seated among cushions of every kind. Behind them, the wicker of a luncheon-basket overlaps the seat. Their dress is simple, practical and altogether smart. A Frenchwoman in an enormous hat and a many-flounced skirt, uttering little cries like a terrified owl, would be absurdly out of place here. The "good sort" type of woman is not exhilarating, but she has her points. And, besides, I must not exaggerate: there are others. That launch over there contains three ladies who are a little painted and got-up and who look rather professional. Here, even shame bears itself seriously and with conviction: these gay persons proclaim something functional and implacable in the shade of their dyed hair, the swelling of their tight-laced forms, the brilliancy of their rouge. Observe that these are not hetairæ properly so-called: no, they fill vague sinecures in the chorus of this or that theatre, they know how to behave, they have nothing in common with those detestable young persons who, in like circumstances in our poor country, would not fail to take advantage of this promiscuousness to indulge in a thousand vulgar and startling jokes . . .

They are opening the lock. A gentleman tumbles into the water. He is fished out, without undue alacrity. Drenched, he resumes his boat-hook, without smiling or accusing anybody. Ye banks of Bougival and piers of Poissy, with what shouts and oaths would ye not, in a like event, have disturbed your spreading fields and your plebeian grass-plots !

But see, the water rises, the river's breast lifts up its floating burden, displays its boats and its women to the onlookers who line the tow-path. And, as in a ballet, one dreams of seeing these serious people each carry off his lady-love or loves, as the boats rise to the level of the bank, and disappear in the fields, his accomplices, at this gentle hour of the golden evening. . . .

7

After dinner, in the bower by the waterside, someone recites Swinburne to the stars.

Poets, musicians, artists sit and listen, carelessly smoking in their wicker chairs, to the ripple of the river. The low-roofed house, so pretty and quaint with its early-Victorian furniture, forms the background of the landscape. The starry night breathes none but vague sounds. A distant banjo tinkles on the flowery roof of a house-boat anchored in the Monkey Island backwater. The frogs will begin to croak when it has ceased. And the most wondrous piece of word-music that exists, perhaps, in any language, *The Garden of Proserpine*, sends forth its

languid cadences and its Lethean perfumes in the listless voice that, little by little, grows weary, breaks, fades away and dies :

From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

CHAPTER VII

COMPARATIVE MANNERS

I

The English have been reproached with their lack of amiability: they, on their side, accuse us of insincerity. Who is right? I remember a sentence of Meredith's in which he speaks of his fellow-countrymen, who "are warm somewhere below, as chimney-pots are, though they are so stiff." Extreme amiability lacks dignity in the Saxon's eyes: he has no desire to please; and, in others, it appears to him a sort of finical affectation, something effeminate and inferior. There is a puritanism, a Protestant austerity in this attitude. Indeed, this race has no need of charm: it possesses strength; charm contains an element of seduction and, at the same time, of death. The Irish are charming and they are perishing. It is a very old law of societies that this antagonism of different races ends in the absorption of the weak man, of the more advanced and weary civilization (the cultivation of which has become a question of snobbish display to the victor) by the strong man, the soldier, who, for that matter and by

a just requital, is not long in dying in his turn. This is the story of Greece and Rome; it will perhaps be the story of the Latins and the Anglo-Saxons: we can practise looking at the Americans with the same eye which the pleasure-sated Corinthians turned upon the soldiers of Mummius.

To pay compliments in England is considered very "French," very foreign; they are not in the habit of receiving them and their confusion in these circumstances sometimes rises to the most comical pitch, so much so that one is inclined to continue, from sheer perversity: and then those clear complexions colour so pleasingly. At heart, they love compliments as much as other people; and the women, who are but little spoilt in this respect, soon acquire a taste for them.

The Englishman is formal, the German ceremonious, the Frenchman polite (or, at least, he was so before he became depraved by the barbarous principle of equality). Two Frenchmen meeting each other will exchange a grip of the hand which the Englishman deems superfluous; two Germans, though they have been intimately acquainted for thirty years, will bow to the ground. But what is all this beside the refinement of the Chinese, among whom each speaker disparages himself in order to exalt the other, where, should one ask, "How are your illustrious consort and your flourishing offspring?" the other is bound to answer in such words as, "The unspeakable hulk that serves me as a mattress and her verminous litter are, I

thank you, in the enjoyment of a regrettable good-health."

A formidable experience, which I will not wish my enemy, is to kiss the hand of an Englishwoman. This is not generally done and one sees young hobbledehoys shake venerable grandmothers like plum-trees, without a qualm. I am supposing that, one day, you want to give a proof of good manners, or, simply, that you recoil from the brutality of disjointing a dowager. You take the hand held out to you and raise it lightly, bowing the while; a resisting force stops you: what is passing through the lady's mind? A tumult of thoughts, no doubt: "What is this Frenchman going to do? . . . Those people are capable of anything. . . . There's someone looking. . . . I won't let him. . . ." All this passes "in less time than it takes," etc. Suddenly, an illuminating idea: "I believe it's done on the Continent." The resistance ceases abruptly, the hand flies upwards and you receive a violent bang on the nose. You usually finish the evening under the pump.

2

Have you read *The Visits of Elizabeth?* Let me present to you a young lady still greatly in vogue in England. Imagine an Agnès up-to-date, an English girl of seventeen, travelling with her maid and, in the course of a series of visits to different country-houses in England and France,

sending her impressions to her mother by letter. The collected letters form a volume, a little rogue of a book which is anything but tedious and which has delighted our neighbours.

Elizabeth talks of everything, but with a disarming candour and an intentness upon "putting her foot in it" which we end by suspecting, not, however, before the author has obtained some very enlivening effects from it. She is a Mlle. Loulou with a touch of the minx about her, a strong tinge of snobbery and an archness that is more essentially feminine than that of Gyp's heroine. She seems remarkably destitute of native kindness. But she lives, rattles and gossips in a fairly documentary way.

Her success in England is due to the fact that she shows smart people in equivocal or unpleasant predicaments. This causes the most undiluted joy to the middle classes. When it concerns their own aristocracy, of whom they are proud, they feel a discreet mirth, enlivened by flattered curiosity: they feel that they are admitted to the Holy of Holies; they listen at the doors of fashion and breathe its atmosphere. When another aristocracy is concerned, the French, for instance, of whom Elizabeth gives us some sketches that are much funnier even than she thinks, then the good public unbuttons its waistcoat and laughs loudly, with no restraining scruples.

English snobbery! We do not conceive how massive, how substantial, let me say how constitu-

tional it is. It differs from every other kind. In a country governed by an absolute monarchy, it is only natural that the magic spell attaching to divine right should overflow from the throne to the steps on which its chief defenders stand crowded. This is the old, good snobbery, in any case the most easy to understand, the snobbery of the Maréchal de La Feuillade and the Duc de Saint-Simon.

To the Americans, the "quality," as people used to say in the eighteenth century, represents a luxury in which they can afford to indulge in the form of sons-in-law: with them, snobbery assumes a quite different character.

In France, a few cases of atavism keep alive the snobbery of the grand period, even as the peaceful angler displays the survival of the predatory instinct in man. We have the illustrious example of the noble lord so wonderfully well-versed in pedigrees, who, having fallen into the lake of Geneva, one day, with his cousin the Duchesse de D——, made her dive in again just as she had reached a life-buoy, exclaiming:

"The elder branch first!"

O admirable phrase! But these are only exceptions. Thanks to equality, that precious conquest of the Revolution, our latter-day snobbery is embellished with hatred and ill-will, is tinted with envy and contempt.

But, in England, the thing is very different. This sentiment seems only very paradoxically compatible with their fine notions of human dignity and individ-

ual liberty; but, if you look into it more closely, it is but the rather absurd reflex of eternal human vanity on the perfectly-hierarchized working of an excellent social machine. In any case, they have this respect and worship of birth in their blood. It bursts through every line of Thackeray, a shrewd satirist if ever one was, but one whose lash is restrained by an inevitable deference: Beaumarchais wields his with a very different sort of passion. And one discovers, with surprise, the same leaven of reverence even in the works of an artist of the stature of George Meredith!

You can well imagine that our little minx of an Elizabeth leaves nothing to be wished for in this respect. Her historiographer informs us ruthlessly, on the second line of page one, that the ancestors of this adorable *ingénue* go back to the Conquest and that she numbers at least two countesses and a duchess among her relatives. She ends by marrying a marquess whose acquaintance she makes at her very first visit in the following manner (I propose to pick a few episodes in the book, at random, among those which are most instructive as to the environments described or the mischievous powers of observation of the fair letter-writer): Elizabeth has just arrived at Nazeby Hall, the country-house of a certain Lady Cecilia, a prominent member of the Upper Ten Thousand, for a cricket-week (a form of entertainment from which I pray Heaven to preserve you for many a long day). Her first blunder consists in proclaiming aloud that the house

is haunted (in England, many a self-respecting country-house possesses a ghost), that they are trying to keep it from her, but that she distinctly saw a grey figure disappear round the bend of the hall the other night and so on. This makes several persons turn cold, but has a singularly exciting effect upon the Marquess of Valmond, who, that same evening, on the terrace, puts his arm round Elizabeth's waist, kisses her and proposes that he shall come and play the ghost to her. Elizabeth, in a rage, slaps his face, for she is a virtuous young person. She and Valmond, he still carrying the great red finger-marks on his cheek, go back to the drawing-room, where a certain Mrs. Smith, concerning whom it is easy to guess the bonds that unite her to the marquess, says, in a loud voice:

"It looks, Harry, as if our sweet Elizabeth had boxed your ears."

To which the simple girl replies (for she does not love Mrs. Smith):

"It is perfectly true, and I will box your ears if you call me 'Elizabeth' again!"

I do not know if you seize the perfume of exquisite refinement exhaled by this little scene of country-house life in the upper circles of British society.

This, therefore, according to our heroine, is the tone of the smart set, the fast set, of people "in the movement." It is explained by the fact that it constitutes a reaction against the tone of the old aristo-

cracy of the worn-out type (what we in Paris would call "the old Faubourg") and also against that of the middle classes, two terrible centres of respectability and boredom which justify every excess. Our heroine passes through these too, first at Aunt Mary's, 300 Eaton Place, next at Heaviland Manor and, lastly, at Carriston Towers, the historic abode of people whom one guesses to belong to a tremendously lordly set: dukes, members of parliament, a cousin who is a curate (and whom, by the way, Elizabeth catches kissing a mature damsel in the aviary); the men talk politics and pheasants, the women High Church or the Anti-Romanist League.

Elizabeth, delighted at heart, because she feels that all this, however boring, is still very safe, very solid in the matter of fashion, is glad, for all that, to return to surroundings better suited to her style of beauty and more like those in which we have already seen her. We find her at Hazeldene Court, at Lord Westaway's, whose eldest son has married an ex-actress, to the great sorrow of Lady Westaway, who, nevertheless, scares her daughter-in-law. There is a horse-show, to which Lord Bobby Pomeroy has brought some horses and his wife. Lady Bobby, who is a woman of principle, would not have come, only that Bobby insisted, as he was showing his horses and it was convenient; but she never comes out of her room, from which she amuses herself by shooting at rabbits just beyond the wire fence of the lawn. Charming, is it not?

Then we have Chevenix Castle, a very modern house, where South-African millionaires provide the wives of accommodating and needy peers with pearls and where other exceedingly well-born people play the part of bear-leader to a family of parvenus. Elizabeth asks some one what the expression "running people" means and is told in these ingenuous words:

"It's being put on to things in the City and having all your bills paid if you introduce them to people. It is quite a profession now and done by the best people."

Lastly, Foljambe Place, with very rich and snobbish Jews: expensive ornaments, gold plate, Louis XV and Louis XVI furniture, Tziganes, Aubusson tapestry. Lord Valmond invites himself (in order to see Elizabeth) to the great delight of the hostess, who at once proposes to turn old Lord Oldfield out of his room—which is the best in the bachelors' suite—as he is only a baron (a trifle !). This woman of taste gushes at Valmond all the more as he is said to be "ridiculously old-fashioned and particular and actually in London won't go to places unless he knows the host and hostess personally" (*sic*).

It is here, at Foljambe Place, under this auspicious roof, that the captivating marquess proposes and wins the hand of the heroine; and we must all regret the omission of the letter which this incorrigible *ingénue* is bound to have sent to her mother on the day after the wedding.

The most interesting part of the book, from my

point of view, is, of course, that which describes Elizabeth's stay in France. She has lived in Cannes before that and is supposed to know foreign ways. The insular qualities allotted to her (deliberately, I am sure, for otherwise they would be too funny) derive from this fact a still more diverting character.

Two things generally prevent the English from knowing what French life means: first, their own lack of curiosity, made up, in equal shares, of a certain mental inertia and a feeling of condescending and contemptuous superiority; and, secondly, our natural reserve towards foreigners, who have so few opportunities of taking part in our home life and in whom the word "France" arouses, according to their bringing up, associations only of the stage, the kitchen or lower still.

This reserve, which goes as far as inhospitality (the author of *Ève victorieuse* very justly places this last accusation against the French in the mouth of an American woman), has as its excuse our stay-at-home humour, to which travel, exile seem the worst and most suspicious of calamities: do we not, in our prayers, call upon the Lord in one breath on behalf of "travellers, the sick and the dying?" It is, nevertheless, one of the least attractive features of our national temperament. The love of saving is another.

Now it so happens that Elizabeth, through her godmother, is received in good French houses, goes about with French people, assists at the arranging of a wedding, at a *rallie-papier*, at a cotillon. She

obviously has not the same sort of observing-apparatus as a Taine or a Chevrillon and her generalizations are sometimes inclined to be disconcerting. No matter, she makes a very good average, her impressions tell: she has seen the surface of things, like everybody, and that is much.

Well, French life, as reflected in this young mind, is really curious, strange and new. It assumes the appearance of a circus-parade, where fantastic characters with familiar names, made up according to well-known memories, behave in a manner which one seems to recognize. Elizabeth may consider herself sufficiently rewarded by the favour of the English public for having succeeded in reconciling with venerable tricks of wit and raillery the French types that emerge from these little caricatures, sketched on the spot, of which a pretence of deceptive authenticity enhances the irony, an irony ever careful not to shock our traditional methods of laughter.

The very language of these worthies (for they talk French) reminds one of the circus, of the clown's slang. One notices such phrases as, "*Il ne faut pas que madame la baronne reste trop longtemps se mouillant les pieds*," and that *ces messieurs* would have to be *très bourgeois* (for "*pas difficiles*") *en voyage.* The heroine, who has attracted the admiration of another's fiancé, is addressed as "*Petite embrouillante d'heureuses familles.*"

Most of the phrases, in themselves marked by a rich exoticism, are placed in the mouth of an amazing

man-servant, who answers to the name of Hippolyte and who is the incarnation of the type of old retainer of French tradition: familiar, cross-grained at times, but faithful as a spaniel, with a serf's devotion for the lord on whose land his ancestors have toiled. This type of Caleb, suppressed by our modern manners and replaced by the triumphant *larbin*, who robs his master and votes against him, a pure democratic conquest, whose jealous and perfervid eye reads the Declaration of the Rights of Man at the bottom of every vessel which it is his business to empty, this type might be interesting to set down. Now Hippolyte, the Baronne de Larnac's devoted *maître d'hôtel*, is the prize ape of the provincial menagerie to which Miss Elizabeth takes us. He has a face like a baboon, with side-whiskers and the rest blue from shaving. His mistress uses him as a cook and a lady's maid and says that she could not live without him. This is how he speaks to her: they are on board the yacht; the baroness is frightened and screams; suddenly, Hippolyte pops his head out of the cabin and says:

"*Pas de danger! Et il ne faut pas que madame la baronne fasse la bébête!*"

Another time, still on board the yacht, he explains all the places they pass through, always ending with this charming sentence:

"*Il ne faut pas que madame la baronne pionce.*"

Observe that we are in the best society, in the country, in Normandy, in a very good set. If Elizabeth is at once struck by the fact that the

women are not in evening-dress at dinner, she also notices the liveries "buttoned up to the throat," the white cotton gloves of the men-servants and the service *à la française* (including even the simplicity of a dish-warmer in the middle of the table), which has almost completely gone out of our customs and which is found, only very rarely, in patriarchal houses and, perhaps, among a few Jews noted for their accomplished social pretensions.

I am perfectly convinced that our fair traveller met and heard Hippolyte. She could tell me where to find him, at a pinch. And yet he belongs to a truthfulness that is superior to art, he goes beyond fiction, he bursts the narrow conception of a type. He is too fine, too unique. His one mistake is that he is presented as a synthetic fact. One obtains the impression that all French servants exceed all bounds in their familiarity. The ostler of an inn, in another chapter, says to the noble excursionists:

"*Je dis ce que je dis et je m'en fiche pas mal!*"

The rest is of a piece with this.

Many other details arouse Elizabeth's critical spirit. The general conversation at table astonishes her as an excess of sociability. In England, people just talk to their neighbours. She thinks the French witty, but cannot get used to their way of eating, which she can't bear, especially in the members of very old families, who are the worst. No doubt, we have all seen ancestors use their rinsing-glasses with etymological strictness after their meals; but this care for health and cleanliness was

respectable in intention, if not in form, and serves once more to illustrate this great truth, that nothing more closely resembles dirtiness than extreme cleanliness.

As for cleanliness, we all know that the English invented it. What am I saying? They have monopolized it, they have made of it an essentially national, inalienable virtue, a rite, an arcanum, more or less, as they have of sport. The enormous vogue of Daudet's *Tartarin* series across the Channel is due only to the caricature of the "sporting instincts" of the boasting Latins (cap-hunts, chamois-hunts, lion-hunts, explorers' humbug and so on). In the same way, jokes about baths and washing, as conceived by the feeble intellects of other nations, form a serious ground-work to Anglo-Saxon humour. The poor Boers, among others, had to pay for the success of their arms by countless quips at the infrequency of their change of linen.

I need hardly tell you that France has come off no better than the others. Elizabeth's visitation does not spare us on this head. We read, "It appears you don't wash much till you are married;" elsewhere, the heroine has a row with her godmother for taking a bath (in the bath-room) "*toute nue*" (as a matter of fact, we have all known old ladies with these strict views, but this one seems to have been the *amie* of an Englishman, Elizabeth's own father, as our heroine discreetly hints); another time, she writes, after the viscount has proposed for her hand, "Just as if I would dream of marrying into a nation

that eats badly and doesn't have a bath except to be smart." And, many more times yet, the implacable child observes the shortcomings of our domestic hygiene with that strongly-marked tone of petty pharisaism . . . Oh, little white sepulchre, whitened in London! . . .

In a less special order of ideas, Elizabeth indulges in observations no less interesting. Very curious are her impressions of the marriage of Victorine, an ugly heiress who receives love-letters from her music-master, with a marquis involved in pressing debts. The marquis, has, of course, conceived a violent passion for Elizabeth, like the viscount and most of the other male persons of this impetuous soil. She drives them to despair, as is right and proper. Their hair is cut *en brosse*. They put their heels together when they bow. But, of course, one couldn't marry a Frenchman anyway.

Meantime, she waits in a cab at the bottom of the steps of the Madeleine, where her married friend Héloïse has an assignation, on the pretext of going to confession, with a young officer; she discovers that gastronomical wonder, gooseberry-syrup; she "does a lot of churches" while passing through Rouen and reveals her artistic level in two lines when she declares that churches always look to her just the same and, any way, they all smell alike (it is true that she might have read Ruskin and that would have been worse); she hears the ill-spoken ostler in the inn at Vernon, whom I quoted just now, refuse to admit for a moment that the Comtesse de

Tournelle has shared her husband's room and persist in calling her "*la petite demoiselle blonde dans la chambre de monsieur le comte*" before all the other travellers, whereupon one of them says "that it served them perfectly right, that he had warned them that their reputations would suffer if husbands and wives camped together." One would be sorry to disturb so racy an idea of French marriage: it is too admirably adapted for the irony of our neighbours.

As one finishes the book, one might easily be tempted to indulge in melancholy. Are men then condemned to make up for their ignorance of one another's deeds and minds only by misunderstandings? No, let us not be weak enough to judge like this. Let us invite Elizabeth again. She carries a neat little scalpel in the handle of her fan. What matter if she sometimes blunders in its use? How right she is to see the grotesque absurdity of the condition of the young girl in France, of marriage as we conclude it and even of our horror of draughts! Let her bring her husband with her, him who is put in his place by his fiancée for saying of the French, "The Frenchwomen aren't bad, but the men are monkeys." We will give him a day with the hounds in the Île-de-France, among proper people; we will show him a *carrousel* at Saumur, for instance, a little aerostation and other things of that kind which he will be able to understand. There are a few left. Boni might get up a little entertainment in the Ile-du-Bois for him, who knows? . . . As for Elizabeth, who has natural intelligence, we shall find a thousand

ways of amusing her: the Odéon, the Institute, the Cabaret du Néant, an evening at Madame de Saint Jacques'. . . .

Thus supplied with documents, in the enjoyment of her intuitions as a grown woman, learning through these experiences how unspeakably exquisite, essential and fascinating are the several factors that go to make up the inimitable charm of Paris life (at least, the Parisians have always said so and there remain a few negroes who hold this opinion), let her resume that delightful pen which was at once so kind to us and so cruel. We shall no longer fear its decrees.

CHAPTER VIII

HENLEY—ALDERSHOT—HAMPSHIRE—THE POOL OF LONDON

I

On three days of every year, the smiling valley in which the village of Henley displays its clustering houses and the Norman tower of its church, beside the soft-flowing stream, is filled with clamour, with flower-decked boats, with women in light dresses: quite a festival. We are gathered to see young men, in incredible skiffs, long and narrow as swords, struggle to pass one another by dipping into the water long implements of wood flattened at the end. Deafening cheers accompany this exertion. The reward of the victors consists of metal cups of most distressing workmanship. The rowers have prepared themselves for the ordeal by a month's training, during which they have lived on grilled and carefully-weighed meats, walked the same number of steps daily, gone to bed nightly at ten o'clock and observed the strictest continence. Some of them have come from very far, from across the Atlantic: they carry the destinies of a great people and their

fellow-countrymen make themselves known in the crowd by their self-assertive twang. There is also a Protestant missionary and paterfamilias who measures himself against the son of a brewer and peer of the realm in a match, which is the great attraction of the day. Such is "the first regatta in the world."

Sport supplies ample materials for philosophy. "M. Prudhomme" would bewail so much wasted energy. Peaceable mortals will congratulate themselves on seeing the old fighting instinct, which used to arm men one against the other, thus modified and diverted. The traveller in this island will necessarily see here a fine lavishness of strength and activity. The Anglo-Saxon race is rich enough in vigour to expend it recklessly; and this animal life is a powerful counterpoise to thought, almost a means of government, seeing that the people is enamoured of it. The Byzantine emperors, who fostered the rivalries of the circus, knew this as well as Mr. Balfour, who recently made a speech extolling athleticism. And he spoke with justice. If the English had more taste, they would, through the cult of this beautiful spiritual and physical harmony, be the equals of the Greeks. But it must be observed that modern sport is not sufficiently dignified by a preoccupying love of beauty. Without this, it becomes silly, owing to the want of proportion between the aim and the effort, and ridiculous when no danger comes to whet its charm.

The waning sun envelops this motley crowd,

which differs from our sombre crowds because of the pink and blue blazers of the rival crews and the white straw hats and the gay frocks of the ladies; on the roofs of the house-boats, the china tea-things are scattered among the floral phantasies; one hardly sees the water, laden with a compact flotilla; amid the popping of champagne-corks, minstrels in Venetian dominoes pass and sing along the launches; the warm and hazy light of this Constable evening fills the valley, gilds with its faithful rays this vision of easy, elegant and adorned existence; and we can look forward to a night of maddened policemen, of extinguished street-lamps, of furious singing, of wild rushing through the streets: the training is over, all abstinence at an end, victors and vanquished are drunk as lords.

2

Aldershot is the English Châlons. I here meet again, as a general, Colonel T——, who used to be military attaché at Paris and whose election to the Jockey Club was for a moment in doubt because of his ancestor's differences with Joan of Arc. It was Baron Alphonse who started this hare: the others had forgotten all about it. Thanks to the general's kindness, I attend the review and, on the other hand, courteous officers hasten to do the honours of English military life to one who has followed their profession in his own country.

Of the personality of the soldier as we understand

it (I mean the professional soldier, the officer), between the strict discipline which continually and indefatigably brings the subaltern under his commanding officer and that compulsorily herded life which we adorn with the name of "comradeship" (a deceptive paradox, seeing that promotion, the good soldier's only dream, is based upon mortality!), not much remains. That constant regard for the separate entity which distinguishes British civilization is repeated in their military organization. Each man's individuality is safeguarded. *Habeas corpus* is the fundamental principle, notwithstanding the contradictions of a retrogressive system of legislation. All England's greatness lies in this. In France, the ideal seems to be to reduce the individual to the colourless, but resigned abstraction of a distinguishing number. Not so here. Apart from questions of principle, there is an utilitarian idea at stake: else recruiting would be impossible. Tommy Atkins, the English "Dumanet," is well treated, well fed, well paid: the army in this island is at the same time the sacred guardian of the public liberties and the necessary depository of the social refuse. An admirably-conceived conjunction! It has its drawbacks: if Tommy has the right to adorn the head of his bed with the photographs of his friends, to make himself a little home in the mess-room, he believes also that he has the right of protesting against abuses. Hence those frequent mutinies, which a Frenchman, who is soon subdued, fails to understand. A soldier who remains a free man goes

beyond our intelligence. And yet how logical it would be to think in this way on that soil each of whose children owes the formidable impost of his blood at times and of his liberty at all times! A national guard, such, in substance and in fact, is our army; the term, with us, ought to be regarded not as one of disparagement, but as an ideal.

From the point of view of comfort, what would you say, "dear comrades" of yester-year, you who remember Mourmelon, the ignominy of its quarters, the horror of its low "gaffs," the dismal foliage of "Wood B 3," if you could gaze upon the shady park, ever gay with military bands, where His Gracious Majesty's officers come to spend in cricket or tennis-matches the abundant leisure which the service leaves them! And you, frequenters of the squalid *pensions* where unemployed combativeness and hopeless dyspepsia grate mercilessly together and of the "military clubs," those dreary back-rooms of provincial coffee-houses, where, behind the partition of the commercial room, one hears the click of the redoubtable dominoes—"It's your down!"—what would all of you think, if you could be present at the weekly guest-dinner of the different messes, with their supplies of rare wines and gold and silver plate! . . .

From the picturesque point of view, this army is admirable; one of these days, no doubt, the decorative mission will be the only one left for armies to fulfil. They make an eloquent appeal to the nigger that is in each of us, with the brilliancy of their

uniforms and the brass of their bands. I have known a number of emotions, some of them quite sublime, roused by the shrill and mighty incantation of the fifes. Certain regiments have symbolic animals—the Seaforth Highlanders a deer, others a goat—which march at their head on parade, a sort of fetiches, of living, petted and august standards. It is a great mistake to leave a cult in the abstract. This is true from the religious point of view, too: the Bible is here as essential a portion of each man's kit as the soap and the button-stick.

3

Here, in Hampshire, is the real English country: green, wooded, with fine trees, pleasant villages on grass-girt rivers, a look of comfort and security. One feels here respect for the past, content with the present, confidence in the future. A glorious forest, planted by William Rufus, spreads shades that are never touched over moss and ferns. Here, the melancholy Jacques of *As You Like It* dreams, leaning against an oak; soon, in the footpath, you shall hear the steps of Rosalind. . . . Further stands a country-house, the seat of the late Lord Palmerston, full of very fine Italian and English pictures, among which I notice a portrait by Lely, the Court painter of Charles II., representing the Duchess of Portsmouth, the fair Kéroualle, the little Breton of middling good family, whose Chinese eyes and too-tall forehead must have stirred the fancy of a king

surfeited with other beauties, cold and stiff as a garden by Le Nôtre, devoid of surprise or mystery.

4

The next morning, I find myself transferred from this pastoral scene to the heart of demoniacal London and nothing could be more striking than the contrast between the England which one sees from the Hampshire hills and that which speeds before our eyes on either bank of the Thames, between London Bridge and Woolwich. The murky water is laden with ships and flows between docks blackened with coal and filled with the sound of machinery. From time to time, a monument as black as the fronts of the noisy factories makes a fantastic appearance in the fog, such as that gigantic bridge whose bascules open like a pair of jaws and whose twin towers are connected by a giddy footway reached by means of lifts.

There is in all this a moving and mysterious beauty. It rises imperiously out of these things which were not made to be beautiful; and therein lies its wonder. It is the new beauty, the poem of eternal effort and indomitable energy, which is sung by the groaning engines and the chink of the gold on the counters. Those merchants and those workmen collaborate dimly and unconsciously to produce the emotions of the inspired singer who will one day describe them to themselves. The least human action is fraught with millions of destinies.

There is a philosopher on board who is a politician too and for whom M. Brunetière wrote a preface, Mr. Balfour : a charming man, for the rest, and wholly intent upon the technicalities of the occasion. For we are on an interesting vessel: Lord Charles Beresford is doing the honours of one of the gun-boats specially and recently built for service on the Nile. The word gun-boat is too modest: she is more like a man-of-war, with her Maxim guns behind steel plates of extraordinary thickness ; room for a hundred rifles in addition to the guns ; drawing *two feet* only of water, an ingenious and, I believe, new arrangement thanks to which the screws, sheltered in a sort of hollow tunnels in the hull, are protected against injuries from the enemy's fire or from rocks : all this constitutes a formidable engine of war.

Here are the Babelish docks: they stretch out infinitely their basins, their sheds, their warehouses open to receive the tribute of the globe. Here is Greenwich Hospital, a famous old palace equal to our Invalides. One's heart beats with the most poignant emotions of adventure and death before the relics of the Franklin expedition ; and no poet, perhaps, will ever equal the romantic and tragic beauty of the few lines, in faded ink, which are here exhibited: the codicil which Nelson added to his will, on the morning of Trafalgar, recommending the mistress whom he loved to his people and his king.

The gun-boat glides swiftly over the sluggish

water. Soon her flat plates will be creaking on the sand-banks of old Nile, her stem will be set towards the fabled heart of the last of the world's unknown continents. She carries two men mindful of that destiny, each in his own way, who are numbered among the most representative of their race: a famous sailor, an eminent statesman, action and thought, brought together by an unanimous work. The distant mass of the docks, the classic front of Greenwich, the present and the past respectively greet the vigorous future and their sons who guide it.

To feel so close at hand, so active, so at one those forces which unite and exalt a nation gives a fine thrill of life, of multiple life, expanding beyond the limits of the individual consciousness. An entire race aims at taking cognizance of itself in the spirit in which, for a moment, it reflects the sights and spells of its greatness. It is a sensation of beauty and one of the loftiest: it reveals to us the same joys before the bold and rhythmical play of a beautiful social organism as before a beautiful form, a beautiful statue, or any other happy and harmonious result of life; it causes us to be moved by the justice of a charter or a law as by the curve or the power of a muscle; and it impresses on our memory the achievement of a race in the history of the world with the same eloquence as does, on the frontal of a temple, the grace of an heroic or divine marble.

CHAPTER IX

ALONG THE SOUTH COAST—A VISIT TO RUDYARD KIPLING

I

Brighton, London-by-the-Sea, is nothing less than smart at this season: a great unpacking of counter-jumpers and their girls; all the back-shops of the East End discharging their overflow on a beach crowded with couples sprawling in attitudes which would shock our modest *sergents-de-ville*, but which here alarm nobody. Yet we are at but two steps from an outdoor sermon, marked by the bleating of a portable organ and, on a board, this perplexing question:

"What would Jesus do?"

2

Ryde, in the Isle of Wight, is one of the prettiest nooks of English nature conceivable. We have come on a cruise in the Solent and, in this dazzling summer, the intoxication of scudding along these verdant coasts is greater still. The yacht lists, the water

foams. Here is Osborne, the princely residence to which every August used to bring "Auntie," as the good people of the island called their late queen, and, next, spreading its lawns down to the very waves, a nobleman's seat, a proud mansion standing between trees three centuries old and the eternal waves, evoking an ideal of aristocratic life, a security of moral dignity and tradition which the land of M. Mesureur no longer knows.

3

Cowes, the yachting capital, is in buzzing activity and this population, living entirely on the whim of millionaires who like to see their melancholy housed in a floating kennel, moves about under the anxious eye of the owners.

Here are the racing-yachts, the yearlings of this season; for under the caps of the different yacht-clubs is elaborated, year by year, a more absurd and more delusive model than the last. Yachting is a sport of the most absolute uselessness. It is all the nobler and the more touching therefore. This childish pursuit of speed is obtained at the cost of everything, especially of comfort. The deck is generally three parts under water, a condition of things unfavourable to meditation. They talk of a reaction against unpractical models; but can we believe in it? I prefer to think that we shall long continue to see those mad, graceful butterflies skim over the emerald Solent: mariners are too charming people and, like

the poets, too closely allied to the moon, under which they too were born, to be ever ridiculous.

At night, we dine overlooking the sea. We talk of Paris; of Marienbad, where the Duc d'Orléans has lost six kilogrammes of our fondest hopes and ambitions; of other trifles.

4

Exile was sweet to me on your green shores, O Sea View and little harbours strewn along the coasts, with your inevitable piers on which three gentlemen play things (sacred music on Sundays); your little hotels, smelling of ship-board, where the luncheon-gong summons the sun-burnt, lithe, flannelled young men to the side of the lady of mature age, ever the same, decked out in a thousand celluloid ornaments; your peaceful esplanades, where the idleness of the strollers, across the smoke from their pipes, diverts that constant watchfulness which marks a well-armed race to the ever new and moving life of the offing. Here one inhales the fragrance of flowers, ozone and confident souls. Assuredly the ease and harmony of English life spring from the adequacy of these men to their country. Neither this nature nor its sons tell their secret: doubtless, they have none, considering that it is enough to be handsome, strong, rich and happy.

5

In a nook on the south coast, near Brighton, at the end of a creek that should lend itself to the smugglers' needs, a village crowds around a flint church. Less commonplace than the ordinary English village, it looks cross and crabbed and presents an almost Breton picturesqueness. Opposite the church-yard, hidden among the trees of its garden, stands the house, the watch-tower whence England's sentry gives voice. Presently, as he sees me to the door, Mr. Kipling, alluding to my friendship with the Anatolian smugglers, of which I have been boasting, will remind me that Rottingdean is built on a cliff riddled with caves and hiding-places, which, for centuries, concealed the plunder, while the tarred corpses swung in chains to the sea-winds.

A classic parlour-maid shows me in. Some one is just scrambling off a sofa : Mr. Kipling stands before me. He welcomes me charmingly, eagerly :

"Tea ?"

Tea. A hostess of so perfect a distinction that one dare not insist upon it, for fear of displeasing her, presides over this rite of English life. Like many Americans, Mrs. Kipling has a very young face and hair that is turning grey. She likes to recall her French origin, to which her maiden name bears witness.

He, the poet, does not look more than thirty. Nicholson's print makes him seem older than he is.

Collier's portrait alone gives the frank, open and youthful expression of the original. His eyes, in particular, hold the attention, behind the immovable glasses, full of light, sympathy and gaiety, thirsting to reflect life in all its forms. The chestnut hair is cut straight over the forehead. The thickset and rather plump figure possesses a singular agility, with none of the somewhat wooden gestures of the average Englishman.

Seated now behind his writing-table, his elbows resting on small sheets covered with tiny lines of manuscript, he waves his intelligent hands, with their firm wrists, covered with short hairs, and at times throws himself back with a boyish laugh. For this much-honoured and famous man, in whom all the dim consciousness of a grateful race now first finds its expression, is simplicity personified.

A portrait of Burne-Jones hangs upon the wall. The painter, who was a relation by marriage of the poet, used, if I be not mistaken, to live in this same house, this little dwelling large enough to contain two such different conceptions of art, one aristocratic, suffering, bewailing from the top of its tower of ivory

> Un amour taciturne et toujours menacé ;

the other bold, free from scornful prejudice, refusing to believe that beauty lags behind truth, impatient to weld together their conquests and to resolve their apparent discords into new harmonies.

We speak first of India. Mr. Kipling has a

lingering affection for that "grim step-mother of our kind." Brought up in the manner of all Anglo-Indian children, he speaks Hindustani with such perfection as is possible in this sort of Volapük, derived from Sanskrit, which serves as a master-key to the 270 idioms spoken between the Himalayas and Cape Kumarin. He declares that he even thinks and dreams in Hindustani. . . . But he knows Northern India best. He smiles when I tell him that I have heard him accused, in the southern presidencies, of northern prejudices.

"I like the Russians too," he says, "with the same feeling of sympathy that draws me towards the oriental. They are so oriental! Look at Tolstoï! He's a fakir. That longing to push his ideas to their ultimate catastrophe is just like the Hindu ascetic. He does his procreative duty and then curses the flesh and retires into solitude. Down to his curse upon art!"—and here Mr. Kipling finds an opportunity to confess that he does not care for Wagner, that he likes Bach a little, Gounod entirely, that he hates Beethoven, but adores Offenbach—"Now the Hindu has passed beyond the artistic phase, the phase of material realizations, and is at the metaphysical phase."

Mr. Kipling is right. People to whom all shapes are daughters of illusion and the unconscious must lack the necessary ground-work for an æsthetic system. In the immense range of Sanskrit literature, there is not, I think, a single treatise on beauty,

the science of beauty. This want of comprehension is a serious blemish of asceticism.

"After all," continues Mr. Kipling, "what's the use of art?"

"A confession of the inability to realize life, is it not?"

"One never knows exactly what one wants. What remains of a writer is a page, perhaps, a line or so. Do you know Loti? I admire him very much. Is he a good officer? From the professional point of view, I mean?"

"Oh yes, a very good officer; he puts a touch of dandyism into it; after all, it's not so very difficult, even for a man afflicted with imagination."

Mr. Kipling gives one of his very young laughs, but he gladly reveals his love for the qualities of action. He is not an ideologist. The virtue of facts and deeds remains the cardinal virtue to him, as to all his race. Here is a great professor of energy.

We now talk of French prose. My interlocutor names his favourite authors: Rabelais, Maupassant; while owning to a great fondness for About. Of Flaubert he has read only *Madame Bovary* and does not like it. I have another opportunity of observing one of those classifications of preferences which seem so curious to a Frenchman. The name of d'Annunzio leads to a very instructive declaration against eroticism:

"It must be my oriental leanings," says Mr. Kipling, "but I don't like a woman outside her house, in fiction properly so-called. She is charming in

real life, but one has seen a little too much of her in literature. There are so many other subjects. . . ."

As I listen to all this, I cannot help thinking that the chastity of the English novel proceeds from causes deeper than cant. The word hypocrisy supplies a somewhat curt explanation. As a matter of fact, this people is perhaps the least sensual of all. Love represents to it a distraction which can be dodged by means of work or sport: among the superior types, passion assumes a character of respectful idealization; among the others, it is a brutal and rapid gratification: it rarely impregnates a man's whole life or wields an avowed tyranny over his senses. We Latins produce on the English the effect of strange monomaniacs. Our French genius, so profoundly penetrated with sensuality in every degree—Renan, France, Louÿs—alarms them. Whether it be because of a less advanced degree of civilization or for the lack of certain nervous fascicles or association (which is almost the same thing), an Englishman will always deny that sensuality approximates to the absolute.

Mr. Kipling speaks very sympathetically of France. One does very wrong to picture him in the image of a fierce disturber of the peace. He says very sincerely, with a touch of blarney, that he would be sorry to see war break out between his country and that of the best story-tellers in the world, the masters of his trade. He extols the delight of living on our hospitable soil. His father has just returned from spending a fortnight among the fishermen on

the Norman coast. Whereupon I complain of those excessive attractions which France presents to her children and which beget a commonplace spirit of thrift, of stay-at-home pusillanimity and of pretentious indifference.

"Yes, they are too well off," cries Mr. Kipling. "You ought to hide Paris from them for a century or so. Then you'd see how they would wake up."

We spoke of war just now. The subject of the Transvaal follows easily enough. Mr. Kipling refers to it without magniloquence, as a question of the day, and he understands, with infinitely more tact than some of his contemporaries, that this is no lyrical matter. It is an unpleasant affair that has got to be settled, a low job of the struggle. This is tacitly expressed. I tell him that I had heard his name blessed (in connection with the Absent-minded Beggar Fund, to which they owed the breeches which they had on them) by Canadian volunteers in London who spoke only French and he tells me the story of a banquet, at the Cape, I think, where the military director of the railways, a Canadian too, sang at the hour of effusion the old Norman villanelle, *Rossignolet du bois sauvage!*

We talk on.

As he sees me out, Mr. Kipling assures me, with a smile, that Rottingdean is one of the landing-points of the French squadron which, according to the papers, is to attack England:

"I don't believe it, do you? Is there really a

chance of war? The nationalists: what about them?"

And we shake hands.

6

At Spithead, on the night of the naval review. A real English grey sky has reigned all day over the jade-green Solent. It suits these things which it has always set off: the people to whom it has given their clear skins and their souls at once matter-of-fact and misty, clad alike in figures and spectral dreams; the countless ships in which they have placed all their strength and all their pride. It is a wonderful night. The wooded shores, pricked with lights, stand out in great masses; the boats at anchor mirror their lanterns in the calm water, where the reflections throb with a restless movement. The moon, already high in the sky, dims the fires of land and gulf. There is a delicious stillness on the deck of the yacht, a stillness amid which is heard a violin that sounds far away and sings almost in my ears, to a very soft piano-accompaniment, that sublime and despairing *lied* of Schumann's, *In der Fremde.* A salt breath rises, across which the two shores of the sea exchange scents of lime-trees and hay. And, in the blue darkness, shapes are vaguely conjectured, shapes of the land and the sea, squat dockyards, slender masts, armoured hulls, a whole vigil of phantoms drowsy with other than gentle dreams. A strong instinct echoing on itself makes

this delusively idyllic and dreamy peace keep time to the regular breathing of its will. A drama of energy is enacted amid this pastoral scenery. Does not humanity, everlastingly struggling to realize a higher type, force to the surface here, in this special point of its planet and its duration, this proud and passionate desire? The century that is beginning shall tell us. Man, who passes, has it as his most sacred duty to greet the race that has received the torch, even though it were from the dying hands of his own brothers. He owes it this homage, dignified by his own mourning, were it only because of the lap that has been covered towards the goal, that tall column among the olive-trees where the wandering light, henceforth fixed by the deliverers, will burn, erect and clear, in the smiling sky, to guide the future.

What a wealth of emotion is that of this evening! So many elements and supreme forces have come to take part in it! Art, luxury, the darkness, the waves panting around us, the sorrowful intoxication of invincible effort at its own cup, the voluptuousness of feeling every note of our most intimate themes arouse an harmonic rustling in the depths of all life's mysteries! . . . The "Lights out!" sounds from ship to ship. It is not the same melancholy martial flourish as with us. It is sadder still, perhaps! It translates, in its manner, the doubt of the closing day, the uncertainty of the morrow, the weariness of barbarous tasks, the nostalgia of other things and other places. The coming of sleep is proclaimed

gravely in it, as it were that of death. Then, the will becomes relaxed in slumber. Proud schemes, lucid ideas prostitute themselves in the darkness to the ridiculous gnomes and inconsistent phantoms of dreams. The clenched fist opens of itself, humbly, with the base and imploring gesture of begging, of begging some boon from veiled destiny. Those distant bugles! I seem to hear in them a wail; man's protest as he drags himself along the harsh road behind the ever fleeing ideal, whose face he will never look upon, unless the ideal turn round to devour him; an infinitely pathetic voice; a timid prayer that does not wish to be heard; a choir of obscure victims in the darkness. But what matter! To-morrow, in the pure and valiant dawn, we will begin again, freed of the enervating dreams of the night, more intelligent, more logical, more cruel and stronger than before.

PART THE SECOND:

EGYPT

CHAPTER I

CADIZ—GIBRALTAR—SPANISH DANCES

I

It is Sunday night. The yacht lies at anchor, at some distance from the harbour. A rough wind, the choppy, foaming waves and a broken pipe in the boiler of the steam-pinnace have kept us on board. Some of the sailors, with the stewards, are gathered on deck beside the galley, singing hymns in honour of the "Sabbath." Our crew is almost exclusively Scotch: thick-set fellows, firmly built, red-faced, red-haired, expressing, deliberately, unhurriedly, truths devoid of all originality in an accent in which the r's roll like wagons loaded with the weight of a compact thought. An Irishman once said to me:

"One could write down the receipt of the average Anglo-Saxon intelligence as of a pudding. It's heavy and massive, it's turned out in the same mould, you know where it begins and where it stops, it is made of the same ingredients and has the same flavour."

These are Milesian exaggerations. They make capital sailors, these children of the Lowlands and

the misty Clyde, even though life does not appear to them in the same light as to M. Maurice Donnay. At this moment they are singing:

A few more years shall roll,
  A few more seasons come,
And we shall be with those that rest
  Asleep within the tomb:
Then, O my Lord, prepare
  My soul for that great day;
Oh, wash me in Thy precious Blood
  And take my sins away.

On a French liner, in similar circumstances, some wag would repeat the last "creation" of Mademoiselle Camélia, the darling of the Marseilles Alcazar. This young lady would herein declare her contempt for too-confiding husbands, or else the deep-seated eclecticism of her tastes in love, provided that you "plank down the rhino:" a joke, one of the old French school and, for that matter, unspeakably humorous, which never fails to bring down the house.

And over there, on shore, in the silver city, under the new moon, the guitars sing, twang or ring under the touch of the closed fists; a nimble, elastic voluptuousness stamps its heels, sways its haunches, rattles with its hoarse throat and snaps its fingers:

Viva Cadiz, porque tiene
Las murallas a la mar! . . .

2

By the circular road which almost skirts the sea, around the crest of whitish rocks, where, among the aloes and cactuses, monkeys disport themselves—the only distant cousins of our race which we have allowed to survive in Europe—we reach the promontory whence our world looks closer upon Africa, the land of marvels as yet mysterious. It was here that Hercules, bringing with him the curiosity and the terrors of the ancient soul, halted before the tomb of the Atlantides, the glaucous deep with the inconstant levels, which rushes or flees under sad horizons. The hero followed no further the bellowings of the herds of the brigand Geryon. The Duque d'Ossuna, who, according to his pedigree, is descended from Geryon in person, still grazes his bulls at the foot of the British fortress. We are in a country of traditions.

Here is Europa Point. From the scarified chalky rocks, on which a very sparse vegetation casts its blue shadows, we look straight down upon the restless sea, with its bottom of brown weeds, where the prickly sea-urchin sleeps with the fish among the pebbles of the deep. We see sentries, a semaphore, a few huts in which sergeants' wives discuss things and scrub their brats. And, opposite, lies the Morocco coast. One must needs look with some emotion on the shore of the great black continent. The crescents and horse-tails of Islam

adorn this gate of the desert and of darkness. But one cannot help reflecting that, except at its eastern extremity, Egypt, this land has never fostered any high activity of either thought or art. How different an historical and ancestral wealth is that which tempts you in the presence of Asia, the mother of our myths, our languages and our Gods! How different a thrill passes through you, how much more copious a melancholy seizes upon you before that sublime dust where, on our knees, we seek the hesitating and sacred footsteps of our fathers! Africa is the fetich in front of the thatched hut, the filibuster in front of the strong-box. Asia says, Heraclitus, Jesus, Buddha; Africa answers, Mumbo Jumbo, Jameson and Rhodes.

3

Dissolve pepper and powdered glass in methylated spirits and you have manzanilla. The glasses leave round stains on the painted wood of the little tables. We are sitting on rush-bottomed stools. A fat person is spinning round on the platform. A voice is heard, in the midst of the silence:

"Oh, what a fine woman to kill mosquitoes on!"

"*Ollé! Ollé!*" screams Snows in my ear (she is called Snows and her companion Dolours), in a tone enough to make me jump in the air.

She has a mordant, strident voice, this gipsy of a Snows, and, in a jumbled fashion, she tells me wonderful things: that she comes from Paris; that she has danced at the Folies-Bergère, like Mlle.

Otero; and will I give her five francs? Well, for the *Petenera*, there's no one to equal her. What panther-like bounds, what hips, what fierce dives forward, head down, suddenly arrested in a gesture of calling, of surrender, of defiance, with arched loins, outstretched neck, head flung back till the comb that sets off her black chignon touches her shoulder-blades! At other moments, the dancers cut very high capers, cross one another, lift one another off the ground slanting-wise, like nervous, wiry marionettes.

Oh, the extraordinary fascination of these dances! The pure intoxication of this rhythm at once marvellously simple and refined! It is like a possession, the assault of a genius that lifts its prey by the hair, a sacred delirium expressive of the mysteries on this side and that of thought, animal and divine in one, Pan swelling his haunches with his mighty brawls! . . .

Follow upon one another the frivolous and charming *Sevillana*, the more Arab, less flighty, intenser *Zapateo*, the *Tango*, in which the dancer stamps her foot as though with carnal impatience and voluptuous rage. On the stage, the women clap their hands, never to the powerful beat of the measure; the haunting guitar drones on; a man beats time with a stick on a wooden stool. You are obsessed, captured by a rhythm. The tyranny of a tune with mysterious associations, with magic secrets, sways you and bends you. It sometimes suddenly changes and then it is like a little spasm.

Or it has marvellous pauses, perturbing to the pitch of anguish, with the sigh of a human voice at the end, some "*Ahi!*" of wonderful value, which upsets you like the revelation of a new sorrow. . . .

Great minds have felt this as yet unanalyzed power of the dance and of rhythmics in general. Nietzsche calls himself a dancer. Who will state the formula of this imperious, veiled beauty? Who knows? A scholar in his laboratory or a poet in his tower? Have we not already learnt that "truth is a rhythm?"

CHAPTER II

AT SEA—CAIRO

I

Cosmopolitanism is in a fair way to becoming provincial. With our improved communications, men leave their homes without fear or qualm and we meet always the same faces, from the glaciers of St. Moritz to the sands of Biskara, under the yachting-caps of Cowes and the grey felt hats with which Nice decks its shores. Cosmopolitan provincialism, that is what it is. . . .

Fashion and the seasons fling this noisy wave from one sea-side place to the other. Its iridescent foam flies with every puff of the winds to the country-houses, the capitals and the gaols. Nothing destroys man's longing for the life of the herd. It weighs fatally upon all those idlers who have individually endeavoured to escape its monotony or merely to evade the police. In any case, this mixed world, a little tarnished, a little spurious, this world of consumptive archdukes, over-dressed, slack-baked youths, peeresses who have graced the music-hall stage, Lithuanian or Buddhist baronesses forms a

rather modern and amusingly "high" swarm of humanity.

2

We are two Frenchmen on board the great P. and O. which is to drop us at Port Saïd. The sensation of passing suddenly from the quays of Marseilles to British territory strikes one curiously. For it is English life that we shall lead for the next five days. We shall see successful novelists play cricket on deck, in a sort of huge net-work cage, with young subalterns bound for India; we shall have stiff, soulless meals; and old ladies will sulk if any one opens the piano on Sunday. As for flirtation, it will be carried on by the unmarried ladies on board with that perseverance and that good practical sense which have made England's greatness.

They have a significant verb in this country: "to go in for." They do not say, "I like tennis;" they say, "I go in for tennis." It is the same with photography, entomology, rowing or Greek verse. They have no notion of things done lightly, of "initiations conferred with a smile." All is business, even their sports. And so is flirtation. For that matter, its difficulties are increased in England, where the supply exceeds the demand, where woman plays so secondary a part, where the mission of a lawful angel in the house is the only one within the reach of a young girl, who has not, as in Catholic countries, the convent to which to retire with her distrust of men and the future.

3

Bonifacio, Messina have extinguished their lights behind our ships; Stromboli has displayed its ruddy cone by fitful gleams; snowy Crete reminded us of Pasiphaë; this morning, over the sea yellow with the ooze of the Nile, old Egypt looms on the horizon.

Two hours later, we reach Port Saïd, the swarming, shouting Arabs, black with coal-dust on the top of their copper-coloured skins, who fill the coal-holes of the *Caledonia*, the docks and the curious ugliness of those buildings which are not forty years old and which shelter the most mixed population, men and women, on the face of the globe.

4

Early the next day, all the morning noises of Cairo come to rouse the good tourist from the still rolling and pitching sleep of his first night in Egypt. There is a general movement, an uproar, a prodigality of sounds and useless gestures, a humming as of a hive. The water-vendors utter their cries, while the goatskin water-bottle displays a quivering belly between its four stumps; the blind beggars drone their monotonous sing-song as they waddle past and their empty sockets swarm with flies; the guttural "*ha!*" of a donkey-boy trotting with the skirt of his blue *galabiyeh* held between

his teeth answers the cry of the vendor of cosmetics:

"Henna! Henna! Flowers of paradise!"

Some of these Arab street-cries are charming. That young negro, who, in an old pickle-box, balances on his head a wonderful cluster of jonquils, whose saffron hue appears yet more delicate above his black wool, says, as he holds out bunches of roses in either hand:

"It was but a thorn; a drop of the prophet's sweat made it blossom."

And this melon-seller sings:

"O consoler of the embarrassed, O water-melon!"

The sight is delicious, the first stroll unforgettable; the warm sun makes you think of the frosts in which you have left your country, the palm-trees rustle in the gardens of the Ezbekieh—a little 1830, but charming—and you wander about amid the eastern sunlight and the unaccustomed clamour:

"O consoler of the embarrassed, O water-melon!"

CHAPTER III

ENTERTAINMENTS

I

At the Court ball. The East is taking to sober luxury. The East, alas, is on the point of acquiring "taste!" All that charm of useless, magnificent extravagance which used to enchant our imagination is dying. Factory-chimneys profane the horizon around Cairo, a black dust sullies the streaked fantasy of Moslem manners and, above the grey suits of conquest, the red flower, with its drooping pistil, of the national tarboosh is fading, soon to wither away for good.

In this well-kept palace, amid this correct festivity, there is not a thing wrong: one would give half-a-crown to light, by chance, upon a drawing-room such as, for instance, you will find at the Bardo, in Tunis, adorned (O æsthetic problem!) with twelve similar clocks; you would hug a guest who, at the buffet, should dare, in accordance with the old form of etiquette (which, let me tell you, sir, was quite as good as the new), to express his favourable opinion of the supper. Alas, there is none of all this! They have

even passed the "so-so" stage: the supper is good, deplorably good, even cold, O triumph! . . . The *stambouline*, or ceremonial frock-coat, alternates with the dress-coat; the women are fat, behind soft-curving Levantine noses, and not agreeable to look at; the sovereign takes Lady Cromer round the room, with an incurably official solemnity, to the strains of a waltz to which not a native waist keeps time.

Scarcely does the curious eye rest upon a sort of cage, behind whose wire grating female forms are vaguely outlined; it is dark in that place (not so dark but that one can see that the dresses come from a good maker); the captive princesses are able to see, themselves unseen, the couples mingling in the dance. The principle of this installation is sufficiently well-known and doubtless the idea was brought back from Paris by an observant pasha. O modernity, modernity! . . .

2

The interior of the opera-house is commonplace and pretty. One would think one's self in any of the smaller Paris theatres built under the Empire, were it not for the low-necked dresses of the women and, in the stage-box on the right and five or six of the boxes on the grand tier, for the great bulging screens, painted with white flowers, behind which, at times, the ladies of the harem move about like ghosts.

We are in an English box. Our host is a finished

specimen of that young generation of politicians and diplomatists, soon to become statesmen, which has produced such men as Mr. George Wyndham and Lord Curzon. In the other boxes are a number of flowers of the Levant, tumultuous beauties, with diversified pedigrees. Outside the Court circle there is a very curious mixture in this society. And official contact brings about the most comical conjunctions. Nothing could be more amusing, for instance, than the visit of an old English lady, full of prejudices, a member of pious societies and innumerable Exeter Halls, to some ex-slave who has become a princess, thanks to her peculiar talents, or to an old *hanum* notorious for having had a score of lovers strangled, when they had ceased to please, and flung into the Nile (they show you the window). For this reason, a princess of legally royal birth (this often thrusts back the plebeian origin for but one or two generations) is particularly run after. They tell me of the Princess N——, who has become quite Europeanized and who even—an unprecedented fact—invites her male friends to lunch. If I were she, I should be very careful when I went to Constantinople: the Sultan has a love for the old customs and a sack dropped into the Bosphorus is a thing still sometimes seen, or else there is that smart yacht, with the sliding plug, on which councillors too distinguished for their integrity are taken for a sail on fine evenings. . . .

We continue to exchange observations by turns profound and racy. An English private box is

never commonplace. In the spring, in London, I heard *Das Rheingold* with young H——, who was then still suffering from a wound received at Omdurman and who has since been killed in the Transvaal; this time, it is Slatin Pasha, the Austrian in the British service, who was kept a prisoner in the Sudan for no less than fourteen years. He is here, looking very neat, in a trim mess-jacket, and one would never recognize the ragged slave whom the English released, after three lustres of captivity: a great gap in a man's life!

CHAPTER IV

TEMPLES AND TOMBS

I

THERE is always something unnatural and sacrilegious in those collections of beautiful things which we call museums. Every work has a right to its special atmosphere, as well as every memory. But, without reckoning the injury done to each of the exhibited objects by the too great effort demanded of human attention, those master-pieces formed into regiments, those majesties turned and twisted about, those withered charms catalogued by archæologists: all this is painful. How much more so in this palace of Gizeh, so artificial, so cruelly Second Empire, with the faults of taste of architects careless of eternity, working for a sort of Yankees in a hurry, a low ugliness, without that vague and rather humorous poetry of the out-of-fashion which was charming and which will one day be admired again: the out-of-fashion, that ungrateful age of the *bibelot!* And here, under assembly-room stuccoes and coffee-house gildings, amid the inferior decorations of the Versailles of a Mameluk bankrupt, the ephemeral fantasy

of a croupier King of Bavaria, stand fifty formidable centuries of memories, lie the embalmed remains of the people that fought, perhaps, more desperately than any other against the forces of destruction.

Those mummies! Their variety of expression is astounding. Some are terrible, like the great Sesostris, who died at more than a hundred years of age, that Louis XIV. of Egypt, with the eagle nose, with two lines of green paint under his eyes; others are pretty: Queen Amenhotep sleeps under garlands of russet flowers gracefully twined round her young breasts—a wasp remained in the coffin when they closed it—or else a hardly nubile little girl smiles, a Gioconda of the sepulchre, between the gold and enamel walls on which she is represented "treading evil principles under foot;" others, lastly, are mysterious, as that of this unknown young man—the sarcophagus, generally so prolix, bears no name—whose entrails were not removed in accordance with the usual custom: he seems to have died of poison. We have here a forgotten palace tragedy, an unappeased Nemesis restored to light in vain.

The jewels, especially, arrest our attention, the wonderful discoveries of Dusher. There are here pectorals of architectural beauty, gold and paste, which seem destined rather to enhance the glamour of a conqueror than the attractions of a woman, for they are too wide not to claim the flat breast of a victor; they seem to have just come from the artist's delicate fingers, so clear do their outlines, so fresh does their colouring remain. There are necklaces of

pearls, which have all, alas, died on their mistresses' bosoms: their gold clasps represent two hawks' heads; others formed of plates of enamel strung together, each of which bears one of the hieroglyphics of "health, durability and prosperity:" the enamels in the delicate patterns have flattened their tints, the lacquered tones have united with the metal to form apricot, pale violet, silvery green and absinthe. . . . Then the mirrors: one, very old, dating to one of the earliest dynasties, once the property of Queen Ahotpu, is all of ebony and gold, heavy and massive, and might have served to cleave the heads of inattentive slaves; in another, a little female swimmer holds up the oxydized silver shell. There are innumerable pots, in alabaster, or in obsidian hooped with gold, to contain cosmetics or eye-washes; diadems shaped like a wreath of flowers with their dainty woven-work on which the stones seem to blossom, or else huge, drowning in the mighty tresses of a royal head the meditation of two collared sphinxes; kohl-tongs, eardrops, scarabs, mystic uræi, bracelets and jewelled sprays, sheaths and rings. . . .

2

The first time that I saw the Sphinx was under the dark sky of one of the few rainy days that the year allows to Egypt. Cairo reminds one a little of Glasgow on those days. When I returned, a rich yellow light fell in slanting rays on the emerald green of the fat soil—a deep green, fed by the ooze

of tropical Africa—and two rainbows danced around the horizon.

Another day, on horseback, after a gallop in the hostile desert, on that border riddled with tombs whose incorruptible dead have not the temptation to set out on their metamorphoses along the stalks of the plants towards a sun which would kill anew this nevertheless more humble effort of life, we saw the monster in the devouring light of Ra, the noon-god, the hawk-headed master, who holds the sacred flail, makes the mud of the Nile to steam and bites the skulls of men. All was aflame. Flickering lights played about the mutilated lines of the haughty face. The head lifted its flat-nosed majesty in the implacable rays, seemed to revel in the splendour of the sun. 'Twas but one more noon after thousands of others: this stone has been baked by more summers than either science or faith dares to enumerate.

But all these recollections vanish in the impression left upon the memory by the sight of the Sphinx by moonlight. Then, the odious Bedouins, whose presence and importunity protect you so well against any true emotion, have regained their mud houses in the village of Gizeh. We are in the silence and we feel the timid lips of beauty laid upon our soul. And yet a sense of oppression pervades the atmosphere: there is a certain terror in feeling one's self form a third in the dialogue of that divine beast, representing none remembers what, and the barren moon, round and "parched with agnosticism," as Laforgue says. The pyramids are spectral under

the cold light. The mind feels those formidable abstractions give way of which it has made the caryatides of reason: number, space, duration. Far away, a jackal wails, like sorrow, over all these things.

3

Four enormous arcades border the immense court; the pavement of precious marble billows round the central fountain that murmurs under its open dome. In the arch that forms the porch of the mosque proper, a frieze runs at nearly thirty yards above the ground and is one of the decorative marvels of all climes. Amid the efflorescence and the exuberance of the vegetal arabesques, the noble Cufic characters unfold themselves in a grave procession. By their gait, their majesty, one feels that they do not hesitate on what they have to say and we, who come too late, think that they did well not to hesitate, seeing that they are beautiful and that beauty creates truth.

All is colossal in this mosque of El Hakim, the largest in Egypt, dating from the heroic times of Islam. But what decay! Yet there is here a Society for the Preservation of Monuments of Arabian Art. And beside us stands a new mosque, abandoned in the building. In this strange country, men seem to look upon the palace and the temple, the place where they sleep and the place where they will come to sleep, as personal possessions, not to be handed down. They build themselves a house of life and a house of death and, by the time that their occupant

of an hour has crumbled to dust, these dwellings become useless, like worn-out clothes, and their ruin is respected. The outskirts of Cairo are full of these shut, empty palaces, standing in their neglected gardens, gardens of fierce weeds that assail the shutters closed upon the old mysteries and the old loves. And, in the town, everywhere, crazy domes split open, like fruits in autumn, and minarets bend over, like the wax candles by a dead man's side.

In the interior of the gigantic monument, which we enter with our feet in huge babooshes fastened over our boots, the alveolate wainscoting hangs from the walls, showing its bare frames, threatening the sultan's tomb. This tomb, simple with a simplicity that becomes pharisaical by dint of exaggeration, stands at the height of a foot from the ground, before the onyx niche of the *hojah*, where the eight little columns that bear the archivolt are eight dead turquoises.

Below, on the matting, an Arab prays, sways from side to side, raises his voice and, right up above, in the cupola, we see a turtle-dove, the bee of this spoiled hive. Oriental poetry loves the turtle-dove, ascribes to it thoughts of meditation and mourning, doubtless on seeing it too amorous. I remember observing some, the other day, among the stones of the Place of Lamentation at Jerusalem. And I think of that verse of Isaias :

> I will cry like a young swallow, I will meditate like a dove.

4

The Nile, like a stem whose roots are plunged in mystery, spreads over this Egypt the flower of a monstrous past, heavy with funeral perfumes that intoxicate like death itself. The inebriation is felt by many of those who live here and are not satiated with the fulsomeness of politics or the wild enjoyments of subscription-dances. Sooner or later, they all begin to dig: romantic Frenchmen, cautious Germans, the very English themselves!

This trade of the jackal or body-snatcher seems to become a most exciting sport. There is no resisting the contagious emotion of a Mariette describing his first descent into the warm darkness of the Serapeum, between the two rows of huge sarcophagi where slept the sacred bulls: the anguish of the old creeds, the unspeakable dread before those silent symbols! Nor was it a vulgar trip that Bruggs Bey took from Luxor to Cairo, escorting King Sesostris, son of Osimandias, along the Nile to the final stage of his last sleep, while the fellaheen uttered their funeral shrieks and, from the banks, a bitter and piercing wail resounded and all the land of Egypt mourned the dead Pharaoh once again as it did three thousand years ago.

And those tombs! The existence of the dead man is revived in all its simple homeliness: we see him at work in the fields, fighting in the wars, hunting on the rivers, dancing after a banquet. The

little wife lifts to her master's knee the lotus-flower of domestic peace and grace. Here, mowers stick flowers into the top of a finished stack; behind a herd of asses, a slave speaks, as a line of hieroglyphics over his head recites:

"The diligent are rewarded and the idle beaten. If only you could see yourselves!"

Go to those tombs and then come back at even, at the hour when Tmu, who is the declining sun, sets his vermilion foot on the Libyan sands. There will be villages, amid palm-trees around a gilded pool, and colossal statues stretched upon their backs, whose navel, under the cut modillion, slakes with a few drops of the last rain the same wagtails which you have just seen among the dancing-girls with their too-slender waists, figured on the wall of the tomb to cheer its inmates during their long leisure.

Scarce a sound; the birds are dumb: one of the profoundest impressions of the journey is this absence of the rumours of life in the plains of which old Nile, according to the hymn of Enna, cleaves the middle even as Ra cleaves the middle of the sky. Egypt is silent: she has too many dead to watch.

5

In a dark caftan and yellow babooshes, I have come to see the sunset from my roof at Bulak. On the neighbouring terraces are goats and fowls; an Arab, anxious for the safety of a goose that has ventured on the ledge, fetches it back with the aid of a

long palm-branch. At the top of a minaret, I see the form of a muezzin proclaiming the glory of Allah on this ninth evening of Ramadan. A nearer minaret, pink and fluted, vainly lifts its balcony: no one appears there; the mosque is deserted. A grey crow perches on the left horn of the crescent that adorns its point. In the west, following the line, close by, along which the Nile flows, the dainty lateen-yards of the cangias raise their mobile outlines beneath the vast golden dome. Over my head hangs the quite young moon. A palm-tuft rustles in the cool wind; tambourines rattle up from the street. Yonder lie the mauve pyramids. This is the hour when, under the crescent moon, bodies begin to cast a shadow, a pale, vague shadow, as though all things, turned to precious stones by the magic of the twilight, do nothing but delay the light in their flanks of beryl, topaz and pearl. It is a diaphanous light: the great planet up there must aid it as well as the moon in its fleeting shadow-life; and it goes down the stair of my terrace, regretfully, before me.

CHAPTER V

THE STREETS—HASHISH—IN LOWER EGYPT

I

HERE, the people spend their whole lives in the streets: shops, coffee-houses are but large alcoves opening on the public way. Lumber, dead cats, crumbling plaster-work, a chaotic heap of dusty rubbish where a little minaret tilts a wooden roof from which the sun has blistered the paint, or a palm-tree shivers in the wind. Amid these numberless ruins, in which appears the gaudily-painted door of a bath or the rush-carpeted threshold of a mosque crowded with prostrate worshippers, pass an imam on his white ass, proud of its bearing-rein, of the ornaments branded into its skin and of the learned babooshes that swing on either side of its saddle-bow; an old eunuch, with scepticism written on his chaps (have you ever thought of the power of irony that a eunuch must possess?); verminous brats; dogs, with jackals' muzzles, barking at the heels of a hashish-eater bleating in ecstasy and deaf to the warning shout of a syce who, in a gold-braided jacket, white trousers and brown calves, runs, at full speed, ahead

of an old-fashioned brougham, whence the inevitable black eyes under pencilled eye-brows appear "like suns under triumphal arches."

Try to relish the taste of that advertisement printed in four languages and displayed in a Greek café in the Ezbekieh, opposite the Hôtel Bristol. It says that Solomon X. will pay a reward of ten thousand piasters to whoever brings back alive his son Elias, aged sixteen, who disappeared on such and such a day. The sum will be paid in whatever condition the lad be restored.

Is it not in the picture? Imagine, in Paris, Mlle. de ——, the daughter of the Baronne de ——, not returning in the evening from her masseuse (I am taking a violently improbable example). What a fuss would be made! Here, in a few days, the poster will disappear, even as the lost object has disappeared, and neither will ever be seen again. But, then, what about the benefits of the British occupation? . . .

2

We are in the midst of Ramadan, but Karagus no longer enlivens the joyous nights after the day of somnolence and fasting. Notwithstanding a certain monotony in their catastrophes, these séances (if I may so express myself) of the Turkish Punchinello had their undoubted charm. He has been put down at Cairo as at Algiers: grave personalities were indulged in; one used to see Lord Cromer, Queen Victoria, the President of the French Republic

in grievous positions. But he still carries on at Tunis and I shall never forget the face of an archduchess who had arrived the day before in her yacht and who inadvertently made her entrance just as the dauntless hero was thrashing the policeman, in the Barbary fashion: a sheer delight!

Despite these prohibitions, you can still, in the open market-place, behind the mosque of Sultan Hassan, assist at frolics of the same order; and here it is no longer a question of shadows. The actors are the grandfather, the father and the three young sons; and rarely have I seen a more united family. After long preludes, dialogues in which, whenever a venerated name is spoken (for all this has a semi-religious character), the spectators kiss their hands in sign of respect, an indescribable scene takes place in the midst of the shrieks of enjoyment of an audience consisting mainly of little girls with fresh young smiles and of sharp lads showing their brown skins through the holes in their caftans. Monstrous artifices give body to the drama. Never was it more correct to say that all the jokes carried beyond the footlights.

And this spectacle makes one reflect that there is no connection between a people's modesty and its morality, unless, indeed, these stand in an inverse ratio. Statistics tend to prove that morality is no higher in France or England than in Moslem countries and, in spite of our ways of thinking, our cant here makes the effect of a ridiculous grimace and our modesty appears what it is, immodest. That brown

flesh is unveiled without causing trouble; a fair skin possesses one degree of nudity more.

Observations of this kind can be multiplied during an evening spent in strolling through the muddy, lighted, screaming, tinkling streets, full of the mixed fumes of hashish, incense and whisky, which contain the night-houses of this city. Since the British occupation, the whole has assumed a less purely oriental colour. The late Queen of England, very stately, in her chromolithographed presentment, still looks down from behind the bars upon the colonial expansions of her children. Tender-hearted Tommy lifts the huge pot of beer which it takes three to empty towards "the dear old lady." Presently, while still contemplating her from the middle of the room, very drunk, he will strike up a song ful of heroic incidents, of men who blow themselves up with their families for the flag and other praiseworthy moral traits, with a pause and a hiccough between each verse. The signs bear the names THE ROSE OF KENT, THE GALLANT HUSSAR; beside them, you will read in Arabic letters, on a board hanging under a yellow candle-end, the names of the ladies who serve within, all as in the days of old.

On a Saturday night, I have seen, in these streets of an infamous and penetrating charm, heaps of humanity piled into cabs, heaps which were all that remained till the morrow of the imposing carriage and the martial pride of gallant Mr. Atkins. His comrades, in whom drunkenness showed itself in an excessive rigidity, passed by, huge and

solemn, riding back to barracks on the smallest of donkeys.

3

On the divan, at the side nearest the court-yard, with crossed legs, facing the stage, but with his eyes wandering over the ceiling or swooning under their painted lids, the man sings to the maddening strumming of the derbuka's tambourine and the high note of the shrill flute :

"Thou hast made beauty; Thou hast said to us, 'Creature, admire;' Thou art beautiful Thyself; and Thou wouldst not have us adore it?"

Beauty is there on the platform, swaying her body to the monotonous sound of the little cymbals which she wears on the thumb and forefinger of her two hands.

"Thou hast created beauty with the pink cheeks, even as Thou createdst Sultan Sleep. Why should we resist it further?"

"You see," says my companion, "here are the dance, the temptation and the song that comment, offer and invite. Charming, that special pleading with Allah, something indolent, ironical and voluptuous very much in the eastern genius. Life amorously rocked in the arms of non-existence: there lies all their philosophy. Omar Khayyam sums up the science of humanity in this verse :

"I came like Water, and like Wind I go."

Around us, men look and listen. Their eyes are languid; at the tips of their fingers smoulder suspicious cigarettes, whose ash, white as pumice-stone, refuses to drop. The dark lady on the platform turns round and round, transformed into a peerless houri, a princess of intoxication and dreams in the smoke of those cigarettes.

"Yes, they are real voluptuaries," continues my friend, "in spite of Michelet. . . Do you follow me?"

"I think so."

"And quite near nature still, that is to say returning to nature, even when they seem furthest from it. But what does that mean: 'far from nature?' . . . Look at that dance . . . ."

There is a noise of quarrelling at the door: a highlander is disputing some mysterious bargain with a donkey-boy. We hear hoarse Arab imprecations, Scotch oaths that roll like pebble-stones, enormous things, lost in the night. But the delusive body continues to sway from side to side and the smokers have not turned their heads and my friend has not abandoned his idea:

"Well, watch the movements of that dance, see what they mean. It is evidently the oldest form of art and all art has issued from there, from that body. First rhythm. Then music, soon isolated, no longer serving to accompany gestures, becomes a hymn, an opera, a symphony. Beethoven issued from that body. Then plastic art appears: clumsy strokes on reindeer-bones try to picture attitude, to jot down grace. The harmony of postures turns into a har-

mony of shades. From all this springs poetry, the queen of rhythm and colour. Jean Bellin, Shakspeare issued from that body! . . . . What's in those cigarettes?"

The smell is, in fact, growing more intense and it is not that of ordinary tobacco.

"Imagine," he continues, "a perfume that should contain at once intoxication, desire, vertigo and terror. . . ."

"You're drunk."

A smoker suddenly begins to yell. . . .

4

What a contrast—we notice it the moment that we arrive—what a contrast between the fertile banks of the Delta and that Judæa which we have just left and which has already forgotten the Emperor—one more emperor, after so many others—and relapsed into its shy widowhood and the peace of its desolation! We have set out on the Lower Nile, towards Mansurah and Damietta. It is not a hackneyed route; at the most, a few sportsmen travel in this direction after game. There are not many ruins and yet it is a delightful river trip.

On the arrival of the steam-yacht which takes us off as the only guests of a princely host, softly lolling on our huge divan, we have no reason to regret the terrible steamers with their narrow cabins (two passengers to the çabin) which convey the explorers of Upper Egypt to Thebes and Assuan,

with all the promiscuity of the top of an omnibus, or the slow dahabiyeh, which, though a floating residence of infinite charm, remains rather delusive as a means of transport. We stop often. There is no traffic on the Nile at night. There is, first, the Barrage, amid the luxuriance of its gardens. An immense dike, built by one of our fellow-countrymen who is at this moment starving, retains the waters when the rising diminishes and throws them into the irrigating canals of the Delta, whose agricultural production has been increased by hundreds and hundreds of millions since the construction of this work of art.

Next come Benha, Samanhud, where the Sebennytic branch of the river begins, Mansurah. . . . . And, on every hand, an incredible impression of richness : considerable towns on both banks, crowded and swarming; factory-chimneys mingling with the minarets; crops fostered with the richest mud of Ethiopia; a dense population, busy and prospering in its humble needs.

This evening, we reach Mansurah the chivalric, after gliding all day, steeped in idleness, past the customary villages, fellaheen and cattle, past the little children who pull up their *galabiyeh* to run along the bank after our plume of smoke, past the dogs barking on the threshold of the mud houses, the kids under the bellies of their dams and the great camels, which, at this golden hour, move on in light, following their shadow at a great distance; and we remember what a river of orgies was this Nile of all the antiquities. . . .

We are silent, a prey to the melancholy and voluptuous charm of the hour and the bells. An Arab sailor in the stern chants a monotonous song. I listen, anxious to know what he has to tell to the twilight. And it is simply a love-song, with a dreamy refrain :

> Oh, the night, the night, the night
> Oh, thine eyes, thine eyes, thine eyes !

And it is thus that we enter the city of St. Louis.

PART THE THIRD:
INDIA

CHAPTER I

AT SEA—CALCUTTA—GAIETIES

I

We cross the tropic this evening. Stretched on our deck-chairs, we enjoy the relative coolness of the open air as compared with that of the dining-room which we have just left, where the swing of the punkahs, those great fans worked from the outside by pensive, squatting Chinamen—the exercise must be singularly favourable to the development of the inner life!—only partly fills the place of the breeze on deck.

You either like ocean travel or you don't. It seems that it unlooses your faculties, your energies; that you get rid of your cob-webs in the dancing light and spray; that you turn, as it were, into sea and sky. Your ego melts away, to be absorbed by the sky and the waters. You communicate with the elements. This is what plain men translate by saying that they feel absolutely stupefied.

A friend responds to my thoughts and, lighting a cigarette:

"What saves us from total absorption," he says,

"is the sense of speed, the intoxication of flight, the magic of the perpetual change of place.

> " Car les vrais voyageurs, ce sont ceux-là qui partent
> Pour partir, cœurs légers semblables aux ballons,
> De leur fa . . ."

Here the reciter is interrupted by a pillow which, powerfully thrown, flattens itself on his face and, for the moment, stifles him.

" I am awfully sorry," murmurs a timid voice, a voice which one would never have thought to belong to the living catapult that almost robbed me of a valued friendship.

My companion, though purple in the face, tries to assume a playful air and declares:

" Oh, it doesn't matter, really. The chair's strong and so is the ship. . . . Now that I know that it wasn't a hurricane. . . ."

The fair-headed child looks like a jolly young orderly, sound and muscular and quite pink with confusion and merriment. Her victim, as he watches her move away, mutters cynical monstrosities about her future husband and the happiness in store for him. . . .

2

The society on board suggests some observations on the Anglo-Indian woman, a type that often differs from the Englishwoman proper.

There was a time when the length of the passage, the uncertainty of the morrow, the absence of re-

sources made it almost impossible for an European woman to face residence in India. At that time, the civil servants and military officers used to make such domestic arrangements as were forced upon them by the fact that they went out there without any hope of returning for long years to come. It is easy to infer from this what prodigious energy and sacrifices the English race must have put forth to ensure its dominion in Hindustan. Modern progress, starting with the opening of the Suez Canal, has changed all this. Every year, now, sees a phalanx of valorous women, prepared to rough it, as they say, setting out to join their husbands, husbands-to-be or brothers, wherever these may be: on the frozen frontiers of the North, among the hostile tribes; in the plague-stricken districts of the South; or in the solitudes of the Central Provinces, scorched by the sun, overrun with jungle, teeming with snakes, where news is rare because of the great distances and of the tigers that eat the postmen. No doubt, we must take into account, among the motives that prompt these migrations, the lack of means, the incentive of an involuntary celibacy: a husband is an article more easily found in the colonies. But no matter, it is all very wonderful and admirable; and there is not a Frenchwoman but, rather than go to India, would go to the bad.

Pending their arrival in the land where fevers, paludal anæmia, cobras and love await them, our amazons expend the excess of energy of their conquering race in pillow-fights on a large scale.

And some one tells me the story of that girl, over there, on the second-class deck. He has it from an English officer to whom he talks sometimes. Miss B—— is travelling all alone to join the man to whom she is engaged. He is not only a Quaker, but also employed on the railways. She herself is a serious person, a little too serious even, and does not play with the cushions. She will turn missionary, one of these days, perhaps, and bore poor coolies to death in her endeavours to take from them their simple faith in Hanuman, the monkey-god, or Ganesa, who has an elephant's trunk. Meanwhile, the young couple will not be rich enough to set up house and will live in a railway-carriage! Certainly, the Indian trains are comfortable; but what a perturbing thought, this honeymoon trip which will never end, a modern and exotic variant of Paolo and Francesca's whirlwind! . . .

3

The new Viceroy is to make his entry into Calcutta. The streets are lined with troops: sepoys with pointed turbans; English soldiers with yellow faces, poor fellows whom beer makes anæmic under this devouring sky; proud native horsemen, commanded by fair-haired officers. Behind the soldiers stands the silent Hindu crowd: fat, oily Bengali babus; citizens with resigned faces, their brown legs showing through the thin fabric of their cotton drawers; a few sahibs, for whom the populace makes

room with the servility indispensable before a white face.

The talk runs, in particular, on the Vicereine, the beautiful Lady Curzon, so much admired in London, whose hats have been enumerated and her dress-bodices described (even with some impertinence) in the papers. Happy dwellers in Calcutta, who will see all these marvels! The tourist lost in the crowd catches only a smile, a pair of fine eyes, under a handsome ostrich-feather that nods with dignity . . .

The troops return through the streets; carriages drive past filled with gold-laced officials, dazzling generals, rajahs visiting the capital, among whom I notice one with five rows of admirable pearls on a pink tunic, a snowy turban and gold-rimmed spectacles.

4

This is the great week, made still greater this year by the arrival of the Viceroy. The Viceroy's Cup, the Indian Derby, was run the other day; the Christmas festivities have brought a large number of people from the provinces; everything is crammed: hotels, clubs, boarding-houses. And the boarding-house plays a great part in the life of Calcutta. This singular city is a capital and an encampment in one: it is inhabited, at the very most, for four months in the year; its buildings seem intended rather to impress by their size than really to shelter creatures of flesh and blood; people hardly settle down there;

the Englishman demands less comfort, is content to dispense with a number of luxuries, as though he were afraid of forgetting home, his real home, and of being unfaithful to his regrets.

The first impression on arriving, whether one pass through the populous suburbs near Howrah Station or along the majestic river with its crowded ships, is one of a swarming, teeming, innumerable crowd. You vaguely realize that figure, too huge to be anything but abstract, of the three hundred million men that live between the Himalayas and Cape Kumarin. You say to yourself that this wave of brown humanity has been ebbing and flowing from sea to sea of the peninsula for thousands of years, amid the luxuriance of as lavish a vegetation and the burning heat of a nature in perpetual eruption. You feel a sensation of enormous life, imperious and glorified, whose force from the beginning claimed the homage due to the gods, a homage which has never been diverted from it since.

The houses of the capital, whether ruined hovels or villas with Ionic columns, are dirtied by the black and torrential rains of autumn. The dampness then becomes terrible; the floors warp, the walls stream. You find mushrooms in your books and in your slippers. The struggle with the elements in the tropics is conducted with less advantage on man's side than in temperate climes. Discouraged, he throws up the game, resigns himself, gives in to the phenomena of nature, ever buoyed up by the thought that an end will come, that he will see the island of

his birth again, where nature does not humble nor absorb the individual, but leaves him the illusion of his mastery, his strength and his usefulness.

5

I have accepted the hospitality of a captain in the sepoys, whose regiment has come to Calcutta for the festivities and is encamped on the immense Maidan, the esplanade of grass and trees which gives a heart of verdure to the city. The guns of Fort William only just point across their glacis in the direction of the town and the river. They do not jar upon the landscape. They dream.

One sleeps well under the double tents, where the heat becomes endurable. Each officer's tent is finished off with a bath-room. The colonel has a really imposing pavilion, hung with striped stuff. On the mess-table are objects of art, silver cups perpetuating the memory of victories in the field of sport, an elephant, also in silver (the elephant figures in the regimental arms in the midst of laurels interwoven with the names of victories), around which, at the hour of cigars, pushed from guest to guest, the four cut-glass decanters—port, claret, madeira and marsala—pass in a mystic and continuous revolution.

The soldiers, divided into Hindu and Mohammedan companies, are, for the most part, strapping fellows in whom hierarchical respect is increased by the respect of the black man for the white, of the

subject race for the conquering race, to the extent of making them a sort of shadows bowing with humble, silent, vague movements. They come from the South, they are Madrassis, second-rate troops lacking the military qualities of the Rajputs or the highland tribesmen. The silence, broken by an occasional bugle-call, is what strikes me above all in this native camp. I think of the French trooper, who is never still, of the songs of Pitou, the reflections of Dumanet . . . These, on the other hand, chew their betel, without speaking, adore Bhairon, the ogre-god, or Kali with the bloody hands. "Food for powder," Falstaff would say. "They'll fill a pit, as well as better: mortal men, mortal men."

6

You would do wrong to think that they make little of etiquette at the Court of Calcutta. It is not even the same thing as at a constitutional Court: the ceremonial of Ecbatana and Susa in the days of the Persian kings would come nearer to it. The story goes that, after Salamis, Xerxes fled in an overcrowded ship. The danger was pointed out to him: he made a mere gesture and all the courtiers leapt into the sea. Lord Curzon's aides-de-camp would obviously not hesitate in similar circumstances; and this would be a great pity, for they are the pleasantest people in the world. Nothing, when all is said, is more logical than to surround the power in these lands with the necessary spells,

with a pomp intended to strike the imagination of the crowd.

Government House has a very grand appearance, with its monumental gates, its flight of steps, its colonnade and its scarlet guards. Inside are immense rooms, with very fine pictures and furniture of a century back and of an uncertain and charming style. After the rather austere ceremony in which the men file past the Viceroy, who stands and bows, came the Drawing-room, the ladies' day: court-trains and bouquets, as at Buckingham Palace. To-night, we dine. It is the first dinner of the season. Only eight guests are waiting in the drawing-room adorned at its four corners by four large photographs of earlier vicereines.

The aides-de-camp, in smart mess-dress with sky-blue facings and gold buttons, and two officers of the body-guard, in red and gold, receive us. Lastly, two more appear abreast at the door, announce "Their Excellencies," fall back and make way for the august pair. He has an energetic, clean-shaven face, full of intelligence and self-confidence, as befits a theorist whom his party have done the honour and joy to fling him into the midst of his theories, saying, "Act!" And this before he has reached his fortieth year, while he is in the flower of his strength and ambition, a remarkable example of that English organization in which society knows how to draw the maximum of effort and profit out of each individual. She is tall, graceful, infinitely comely and beautifully dressed—a white gown strewn with small

pearls—with superb shoulders, her head poised on her neck in the mid-century, Winterhalter manner, but with such patrician elegance, as Octave Feuillet would say, heavy golden chestnut hair and admirable eyes.

In the dining-room there is an empty throne on a platform behind the Viceroy: great purple flowers scattered over the cloth; scarlet servants behind each guest; invisible music, serious-looking gold plate, Second Empire cooking: rich soups, *suprêmes*, everything excellent for that matter. We talk of London, of the ball at which I first met Her Excellency, then a young débutante and the beauty of the season, of different people in Europe, of Paris, that Washington of France, and of Washington, that Paris of America, where the king her father had her brought up, like the princesses of the fairy-tales, far from all Chicagoes. We rise and, in the large drawing-room, while the band sighs forth things by Mendelssohn, each guest, beaten up in turn by a courteous aide-de-camp and driven towards the corner where the Viceroy is seated, enjoys a few minutes of substantial conversation.

7

The next day, at the races, there is a desperate assault of elegance. Mrs. This has sprinkled three extra orange rosettes on her bodice and Mrs. That expects to make a great hit with her magenta trimmings. And you will go to your grave, perhaps, without having gazed upon the lace flounces of the

Collectress of Barrackpur or the plume of feathers proudly hoisted on the summit of the hat of the colonel's lady of the 14th Elephant Battery, like a flag planted, amid the rapturous joys of victory, on a long-defended citadel. And how poor she looks, the fine lady, in the viceregal carriage and four, the carriage with the bronzed postillions, in their pigskin breeches; the millionaire tourists, how poor they look too! And poorest-looking of all are, beside the carriage where the first American vicereine of the Indian Empire sits enthroned, the descendants of the emperors of Delhi, of the glorious Padishahs who sprang from Timur Bey, so many embarrassed, second-rate, resigned vassals and abolished glories. This lesson to be learnt from things and events is taken in, as she passes in her smart phaeton, by the beautiful L——, the famous nautch-girl, who owns half a million's worth of jewels, dances only for princes and represents in Calcutta the first rank of what Rudyard Kipling calls "the oldest profession in the world."

CHAPTER II

CALCUTTA: THE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS—THE SQUALID QUARTERS

I

WE are at the "Zoo." The band of a native regiment is playing, with movements of an exotic merriment, selections from *The Shop Girl*, which is coming into fashion in Calcutta this year. We escape to the back of the gardens. There are animals everywhere. If you do not like them, you must not come to India. They reign here as masters. This is the land of the Ramayana. All living nature feels at one here; there is no inferior form of life; the animals bring Rama their strength and their wisdom to help him to recover Sita: for the rest, those bodies are inhabited by the souls of the ancestors departed or the souls of the sons unborn.

Then Buddha preaches the immense love of created things. His teachings have all the Franciscan gentleness; his legends go beyond it. One day, he gave his flesh for food to a tigress whose whelps were hungry. In this formidable chaos of forms and symbols which is the Hindu religion, the animal gives

its likeness to the gods, covers the temples with its painted or graven images, even as it mixes familiarly in everyday life. It is not shy : a kite snatches a loaf from the hands of an old woman in the open street; the sparrows come in through the windows of the club, peck at the crumbs under the tables, drink the water in the finger-bowls, their feet clutching the edge of the glass: the sparrow is Gavroche; the crow, the insupportable, shameless, noisy, vulgar rascal of a black and grey crow, so well known to all who have been to India, is Boireau. The little striped squirrels, the parrakeets, the monkeys run about the trees. The flamingoes and the cranes people the swamps, the crocodiles the rivers, the tiger and the elephant the deep jungle. In the old temples, the flying foxes hang in clusters from the vault, the wild bees have their combs between the heavy breasts of the goddesses. The snakes invade the houses: you must never move about without a light; the white ants devour your clothes and your books. Sometimes there are mysterious migrations, sudden, irresistible bursts of life, as in Kattywar, where, in certain years, legions of rats come forth from the ground, invading and devouring everything on their passage. They are of an unknown species, red as the sand, and they disappear for years as mysteriously as they came.

Everything swarms on this ardent soil: fauna, flora, humanity. And with what a will to live, logically counterbalanced, among the philosophers who have raised themselves above mere instinct, by the

wish for non-existence! Seeds sprout in the bodies of insects; the plant conquers the superior organism, kills the caterpillar, which becomes a root. And this fact corresponds with ten thousand others.

No artist escapes the imperious instigation of this animal and vegetal world which crowds and closes round you on every side. After the authors of the Ramayana and the Sakuntala, an Englishman has written the poem of the jungle. Following the natural bent of his temperament, Rudyard Kipling goes for action, for energy. His two books of the jungle glorify it in the midst of the most fascinating setting. The story of the man-cub represents the childhood of an Anglo-Saxon Siegfried, the victory precisely of human ingenuity and courage over that overwhelming nature. In reality, the hero of the English novelist is a Hindu only by convention. The race subjected by the English was subjected already by the sun, by the fatalities of the air and the soil, of dead and living nature. It resigns itself, does not dream of ruling, is born, accepts and dies. There are real man-cubs in India, but they are idiots, go on all-fours, do not speak and eat only raw meat.

2

The Chinese quarter of Calcutta, at night. A police-officer accompanies us. What we are undertaking this evening is a grand-ducal round of the slums of the great cosmopolitan city. First, Bentinck Street, the Chinese bazaar, a procession of little

shops full of busy yellow faces, leaning over sewing-machines or boot-soles until two o'clock in the morning almost every night, we are told: a laborious, pertinacious race, alarming and haunting, which, much more than the Hindus, gives an impression of mystery, of profound difference from us, of incomprehensibility and hallucination.

I shall never forget that gaming-house where the Chinese coolies crowded round the table, under the glimmer of a lantern hanging from the black rafters. There is a little altar in one corner of the room, a pot of ashes before unknown sacred objects, conundrums, grimaces in which, according to the formula of these creatures, the dread divinity resides, a pot of ashes in which joss-sticks are stuck and slowly burn away. The croupier divides a heap of cowries with a sort of brass blade or rake. Then, with the aid of the same implement, he draws the white shells towards him, four by four, with a light and cautious movement. The winnings are distributed according as one, two or three remain.

The players are interesting to watch: almond-eyed faces that smile with the lips and the eye-lids; black pig-tails that hang over one shoulder with their tip lying on a heap of coins; long, cruel, caressing fingers, the fingers of a race clever at exquisite crafts and ingenious tortures, fingers which one imagines as dexterous at scratching a landscape in the down of a plum with a slender nail as they might be at gently sawing a throat with a chip of bamboo to languorous music in the twilight.

No Japanese mask, no netsuke lovingly carved in a dream of minute horror could exceed in intensity the expression on the face of that old man, over there, who thrusts out his chin, with its pointed tuft of beard, over the heaped-up stakes. The wrinkled parchment cheeks are hollow; so are the temples; the concave forehead retreats above the bristling eyebrows. It is a face all of holes, from which the eyes shoot forth their covetous and malefic glance. . . .

3

A moment later, we cross the threshold of an opium-den, kept open in our honour to the great delight of the customers, whom a vigilant administration does not allow to intoxicate themselves after nine o'clock in the evening. For that matter, the aforesaid administration provides the opium itself: the quality would be so bad but for that guarantee, don't you know? Noble-minded old ladies and well-meaning gentlemen are in despair at this fact, at home, in the native island, under the ceiling of a certain Exeter Hall which you will hear mentioned, if you come to India, and without affection, perhaps. It is the centre of what we might call English Bérengism, the league against the licence of the streets and for the improvement of the heathen, the home of the Protestant propaganda, the manufactory of tracts and ingeniously-garbled bibles, the nest from which take flight those swarms of male and female missionaries who darken the skies of Africa

and Asia, settle down in the best places and perseveringly propagate their species, assured as they are of a supplementary allowance for each additional child.

But to return to the opium: the penetrating odour catches us by the throat on the threshold of the miserable hut where the smokers lie on beds, two by two, with the little lamp, under its glass shade, between each drunken pair.

"It's an excellent febrifuge," says the officer who accompanies us. "But come and see a Hindu den."

Here, there are no beds: the people are lying on the ground. A woman runs away when we come in. The men make a show of rising: they are servants, workmen, the humblest of those "bold wooers of insanity" who, throughout the East, ask the formidable drug for the secret of life or its oblivion.

The rest of the evening consists of kaleidoscopic visions that flee, return, vanish before our eyes. Whole streets pass bordered with great cages in which Japanese painted dolls, curious and deceptive little creatures of love, hail the passer-by with bird-like cries; at this door, a Hindu beauty smiles sweetly, as Sakuntala must have smiled to her hind; further, a Viennese woman jabbers her queer English; in the Moslem concert, where we sit down for a moment, two nautch-girls strike their anklets together and, with the tips of their henna-stained fingers, spread out, at the bottom of their gauze skirts, laces of silver incrusted with green beetle-wings.

They wear a silver nail in one nostril and the cartilage of their ears is pierced four-fold. . . .

And we turn back, pursued by the musty odour of the opium, the wail of the native instruments, the obsession of all that strange life and of that voluptuousness which we shall never fathom and never measure.

CHAPTER III

HINDU INDIA—BENARES

I

A Hindu writer once said that Europe was as favourable a district for the study of religions as the desert of the Sahara for that of botany. Nothing could be truer. Our attitude towards the Godhead is one of extraordinary lack of ceremony. Religious duties fill only a modest place among our daily preoccupations. The most righteous people think that they have discharged their tribute to the Infinite when they make a few mechanical and occasional gestures. The Hindus are more logical. Even as there is no comparison between the finite and infinite, neither is there any, for them, between the homage due to the one and that due to the other; that is to say, their religion overflows and swallows up everything: material life, its passions, its very needs are deluged, annihilated; man remains motionless, hypnotized, prostrate under the Divine.

Benares, the sacred Kasi, is perhaps the one spot in the world where one might fix the ideal bridge which man, since all time, has tried to throw into

the unknown, as the spider throws its thread. The air is thick with formidable presences, from the animal-gods of the crowd to the Brahma Trismegistus of the priest and the divine essence pursued in the trances of the Yoga by the dreams of the gymnosophist, further than the thresholds of language and further than the horizons of the abstract.

An approaching eclipse has lately attracted numberless pilgrims, thirsting for the signal merits procurable by means of a bath in the sacred river under the darkened disk of the moon. All the roads that converge towards the town are covered with a grey and patient crowd, carrying brass pots in its hands. The trains discharge a continuous stream of contemplative humanity. The streets swarm. The Ghats, the great staircases that descend to the Ganges, disappear under the mass of the believers and the rush-woven umbrellas of the priests who squat before the little instruments—vessels of ochre, spoons, spatulas and pincers—with which they restore the ritual marks of caste on the foreheads of the fervent emerging from the water. The fakirs smeared with ashes stare fixedly before them. Their number is frightful, their motives disquieting. None has ever been able completely to enumerate their sects. They are generally differentiated by the manner of their mortification. Here is one who has held his arm upstretched for the last ten years: he seems petrified in the obstinate attitude of a harbinger, or does he point with a dead finger to the empty sky? The limb is ankylosed, will never be lowered

again: the man will die thus and his stiff arm will stick out hideously beyond the edge of the funeral pile. Here is another, a very old man, meditating between a little *chela*, or disciple, ten years old, perhaps, and already smeared with ashes, and a familiar mouse, which pushes its snout between the bars of its cage. A third, with clenched fist, shows his nails, which have pierced his palm in their slow growth and now appear through the back of his hand. Yet another, lying on his back, with a little earth on his upper lip, has been waiting for three days and three nights in the open air, without moving or eating, for a mustard-seed laid on that pinch of earth to sprout in the warmth of his flesh. What are the motives of these actions? They cannot be explained according to our logic. Though we may conceive Buddha endeavouring to annihilate desire by the suppression of the body and the subjection of its exigencies, or Christian asceticism offering up its sufferings for the salvation of sinners, we remain stupid in the presence of these men. Perhaps they ask of pain the absolute which others have sought in pleasure. Are they horrible idiots or so many more proud men, like the stylite in *Thaïs*, haunted in their narrow brains by barbarous "records?" They are something of all this, no doubt, with varied proportions weighed in other scales than those in which we measure facts and ideas.

2

Everything escapes our understanding in this country; our paltry laws, our minute conceptions of good and evil all fly into fragments before the onrush of disordered phenomena. We go to see an old Yogi sitting quite naked in a garden of roses. His reputation for holiness stretches from one end of India to the other; his statues, in the meditative attitude of Buddha, are found in the palaces of kings and in the traders' shops; in fact, the title which the veneration of the faithful bestows upon him is that of *Swami*, which means God. He distributes pamphlets, describing his life and miracles, to the visitors. One contains a double text, in Sanskrit and English, together with ideas which one would swear to be German and which, nevertheless, belong to the oldest system of metaphysics in the world, that in which the sage has sought a refuge not only for his thought, but for his activity, his very totality. One evening, on the bank of the sacred Ganges, at Hardwar, the spot where the river falls from the forehead of the Himalaya (which is Siva) "like a necklace of pearls of which the thread is broken," the ascetic flung into the river the *kupin*, the rag of stuff which was his last garment and his last earthly possession. This was on his return from long pilgrimages across the whole of India, from Behar to Deccan. He had visited the four Dhams and the seven Puris. He had passed through every initiation,

His wife, married in her twelfth year, his son, dead at the same age, he had left behind him on the way. The attribute of action in the human mind, the Rajas, he had annihilated: it is the first bandage which illusion binds over our eyes. Then he had understood—more than the understandable—foiled Maya, realized the supreme correspondences. The absolute to which he had brought not only his thought, but also his whole life, along the road of his sacrificed senses, now opened up to him those ecstasies which human words have never been able to describe.

3

We find him talking with little Madame de B—— looking so amusing in her tailor-made flannel dress and her man's hat (notwithstanding the Indian sun, she refuses to wear a helmet). Madame de B—— is travelling about; they told her at the hotel that the holy man was one of the curiosities of the place; besides, he lives quite near the Monkey Temple, which you have got to see, and she will take Gopi Nat's shop on her way back: she will have done the shop, the monkeys and the holy man on the same morning.

The mahatma—he has put on a light apron—is sitting cross-legged under a columned kiosk, with Madame de B—— beside him, the handle of her sunshade, which is the head of a rabbit in ebony, lying on an open commentary of the Vedas, whose pages are fluttered by the cool breeze. At their feet squat disciples and the hotel guide. Around

are roses, a murmuring of slow water, the trees of a Hindu garden, sacred monkeys on the coping of the walls. The old man comes towards us, takes our hands with a charming movement and makes us sit down by Madame de B——. He has the dead amber skin of his caste, the Brahmans, a very refined and very gentle expression and the most delicately eager manners. He is really "a dear old thing" as Miss D——, the charming daughter of our friend the Commissary of the Thuggee and Dacoity Department, declared that evening.

A disciple hands us the list of visitors, printed at the end of the biography of the Swami, who, with a thin finger and a kindly smile, shows us the word "France." Next, for want of an easier method of intellectual communication, he begins to tell or rather to chant to us a verse of Sanskrit. I listen to the bell-like, sonorous tones of the ancestral tongue, "more delicious than the fruit of the mango-tree," a young Hindu poet said to me the other day, "for in the mango there is a stone and Sanskrit is all sweetness." I read the sense of those bronze syllables in the English translation:

"There exists no absolute nor absence of the absolute in the Ego, for no element distinct from the Ego has ever been known."

"That's Kant," says some one, pretentiously.

Madame de B—— is evidently thinking of her menus of the coming winter.

The roses send forth their fragrance.

We take our leave.

4

My friend went back again to see the holy man with an interpreter. He had the fixed idea of tempting that solitary, as he said. But the solitary was not in the humour to talk philosophy and his mistaken interlocutor assured me that he produced upon himself the effect of a tedious old professor boring a little boy that wanted to play. Finally, the Swami took his hand, made him sit down on the ground beside him and the young Rajah of T—— photographed the two together.

We had as our professor of mathematics an old Jesuit who had invented a theory of gravitation and who used to play ball, like a little romp of a girl, during recreation. Now that I think of it, the Swami resembles him in face and perhaps in soul. Or is he simply a Francis of Assisi, an artless mind and a consoling presence ? . . .

5

What a curious country is this: close by the Garden of Wisdom, in a red temple, they were sacrificing a goat to the cruel goddess Durga, amid the yells of hundreds of monkeys on the walls, the domes, the staffs of the gilt, triangular ensigns. A mother, with her young clutched to her stomach, swings, head downwards, from the chased bronze bell. An aggressive old monkey shakes his fist at

us, chatters with his jaws and, with a bound, leaps on another cupola of maize-spikes, under which the Goddess of Bad Dreams awaits the offerings of those who have killed sleep. It is a sanctuary of the second rank in the shadow of the greater terror. I give two annas to the priest: the priest of the Goddess of Bad Dreams. . . .

6

We return for one last visit to the Golden Temple, the Holy of Holies of the Holy City, through the narrow streets, the displays of idols, lingams and love-charms. Little by little, the atmosphere of unbounded fervour, the permanent exaltation of that human crowd towards the divine horde at which it flings its adjurations and its prayers, the ecstasy of those naked beggars, of those pilgrims absorbed in the most minute religion that exists: all takes hold of you, fills you with a sort of hallucinatory uneasiness. From the sides of the columns, in the shadow of the eaves lean images of musical *apsaras* in attitudes of distraught flight, reminding one of Gothic gargoyles. A great bull in red stone stands there, the emblem of Siva the creator. Around it turn worshippers, with brass vessels in their hands, priests, whose hard faces make me think of the canons of Toledo in a fine book by M. Léon Daudet, and supine cows munching flowers.

You slip in water, mud, on fresh leaves. A woman devoutly sprinkles with lustral water a sandstone

lingam crowned with a marigold. Another implores some favour of the planet Saturn, personified by a shapeless image. Gongs, conchs and, in an outer gallery, enormous drums burst forth at intervals, filling everything with an ardent and painful vibration. Heavy miasmas rise from the famous Well of Knowledge, where the god resides amid the decaying rubbish of countless vegetable offerings. This odour of death and fermentation together issuing from the Well of Knowledge is an alarming symbol. And in the blue sky stand the gold-cased domes where numberless parrakeets pair; and their flight traces a flash through the blue from the holy temple to the profane minarets of Aurungzeb's mosque, rigid, threatening, proud and faithful.

At the ghat at the foot of the temple, we embark on the Ganges. The river, on the left bank, washes a front of palaces and temples many miles in length and the steps of innumerable monumental stairways. The most excellent of pious works consists in building a dwelling or a sanctuary on that sacred bank whence the soul flies straight to the creative essence and the bosom of Buddha. The other bank, quite bare, carries a curse: who dies there is sure of being reborn under the grievous shape of a donkey.

We go up the stream in one of those large, lazy boats surmounted by terraces filled with seats, in which families live and die, rocked by the divine current. The boatmen regulate their strokes to the rhythm of an invocation of the river, "Mother Ganges," whose mere name is sanctifying, a prayer

as old as the river itself, with a refrain—"*Ganga djaï !* Victory to Ganges"!—which ends in a guttural sound, untranslatable into our articulate language, a spasmodic *han !* that resembles nothing else and gives sudden and mysterious impressions of different forms of humanity. Next, borne on that never yet heard harmony, the holy city passes slowly before us, the mysteries of the ages, tenebrous idols, proud palaces, all the apparatus that masks the impenetrable soul of this land.

Dogs, fat tortoises in the water, flames around funeral piles, stiff outlines showing through wet cloths that mould the corpses, silent kinsmen. . . . They burn the dead here. The ashes are for the river. As the poor have not the means to buy a first-rate pile and as the *domra*, a member of an infamous caste which alone has the right to supply the necessary wood, charges very dear for it, the poor go down the river very indifferently burnt. The fat tortoises know it. And thousands of men bathe daily in the Ganges and drink its water without a qualm. This appears abominable to our European feelings of delicacy. But what a much broader consciousness it shows of life in death, of the universal circulus, of the one substance!

7

Further on, down a ghat with disjointed steps a temple has slipped into the water. Columns and carvings appear above the surface, fakir stylites lift

their grey bodies and, at their feet, the eternal marigolds whirl round in an eddy. And, above the confused heap of wherries, of bamboo platforms, of men and women, of polished and gleaming libatory vessels, above the naked torsos with a strip of stuff wound round them, above the dogs wandering about the steps, above the prostrate faithful, there reigns a mad efflorescence of straw sunshades, of every shade of yellow, planted at every angle, some like golden mushrooms over stalls, others flat against the side of a porch, like votive shields. All this is overtowered by the peculiar domes, with bell-turrets glued to the central cone, springing, so to speak, one from the other, like flames, like the petals of a flower, of unknown origin, an architectural riddle unsolved to this day.

Then, palaces follow upon one another, built by all the princes of Hindustan. I notice that of the Rajah of Indore, with its painted balconies and its roof resting on a quaint, almost Louis XV flowered cornice, and that of the Maharana of Oodeypore, the premier Indian monarch, whose house displays the proud elegance of the Rajput monuments, with its gate between the two sloping towers, with pointed battlements.

More flights of steps and terraces, all swarming with crowds; an observatory opening graceful miradors over the river and full of huge instruments of unknown uses; houses between which, in a dark, climbing street, a group of women in bright-coloured saris disappear helter-skelter: we just catch a glimpse

of the sight, one of unforgotten picturesqueness; grey monkeys and blue pigeons fighting for the corn between the emaciated feet of a motionless ascetic; a wrestler practising before an image of Hanuman (the Hercules, the St. Christopher of Hindu mythology) and lifting a mill-stone in the shape of a crown; a thousand ever-changing, ever-renewed visions under the setting sun which purples all things; the perturbing effluvia rising from the edge of the water itself: charred flesh, aromatics, smells of cinnamon, of dying flowers and stables; and always the obsessing "*Ganga, Ganga djaï!*" a spasmodic cry which now sounds like a death-rattle, while a phrase of Villiers de L'Isle-Adam recurs to my mind before the magnificence of the twilight and I think of that "evening in the earliest ages" when "the death of the star Surya, the phœnix of the worlds, tore millions of sparks from the golden domes of Benares."

CHAPTER IV

IN RAJPUTANA—JEYPORE

I

In the evening—what a contrast!—we dine with an amiable English official, at ten miles' distance from the native city. Every town, important or not, in modern India consists of a native quarter and an European "cantonment:" the latter is removed as far as possible from the other and formed of houses known as bungalows, surrounded by immense gardens known as compounds and scattered at great distances which make communication impossible on foot.

After dinner, a lady played the banjo, another sang, then another. They sang two of those appalling English songs, vulgar without being simple, commonplace without being ingenuous, utterly devoid of sincerity without, nevertheless, displaying any amusing touch of fancy or the least dash of art, works by bad makers prepared in the worst Italian moulds without preserving the original accent. Average people, in England, sing or listen to them promiscuously with

their beautiful old popular melodies, with the best songs of Gounod, of Mademoiselle Chaminade, of Signor Tosti (a knowing one, he, settled in London, in the middle of the market) and with the tunes in their last musical comedies, which, for that matter, are often charming and, at least, reveal some originality and a personal grace. But they make no attempt, these extraordinary people, to discriminate between the worst and the best: it is all absolutely alike to them! One ends by asking one's self, By virtue of what mysterious law do they think themselves, at certain moments of the day (generally after the evening meal) obliged to sit down in front of a piano and to emit irregularly-spaced sounds with the look of people who would rather be somewhere else?

"I have it," cries my friend, whom this riddle is beginning to irritate, "I have it! It's another case of sport! They do not sing to express something, the trouble at their heart or the aspirations in their soul: they delight in a difficulty overcome, in the exercise of their lungs. A note is a thing which you catch, like a ball. Do you take them for play-actors, that you ask them to exhibit sentiment? That is not manly for a man nor decent for a woman. There are things which one doesn't show in public. But the agility of one's gullet, the vigour of one's bronchial tubes are proofs of a sound constitution for which one is entitled to claim respect and the musical composers are there to assist you. Besides, it's always done after dinner, like dressing before or

drinking port at the end. And then, what could they do instead? It's a function: there you are! Their pleasures are all functions!"

I considered that my philosopher was more or less right. It is the idea of sport which, to these men, secretly dignifies the practice of art. In the eyes of some, this idea is not even sufficient. How instructive is the story of that young subaltern, an acquaintance of an English friend of mine, who, on being transferred from the dragoons to a regiment of hussars, became the object of a thousand persecutions, first, because he was too heavy for polo and, next, because he played the violin. They thought that an officer was degraded by "scraping the bowels of a cat," to use the formula which, in the British cavalry, expresses the art of Paganini. It is a very interesting, but, above all, an admirably logical fact. A soldier has no business to play the violin and those young fellows made themselves the equals of the most subtle analysts by their prompt and definite notion of the duties and seemliness of their calling. There is much to be expected from an army which is so little inclined to allow itself to be distracted by outside futilities. Needs must one raise one's hat to it, respectfully.

2

The *décolletage* of the Rajput women takes an original form. It is upside down. The corslet of stuff that imprisons the breasts stops suddenly

underneath and the rest of the upper part of the body appears bare through the symmetrical folds of the sari. . . .

Such visions accompany me through the streets of the astounding and magic city of Jeypore, the pink town, the mad town, built by a Neronian astronomer, the great Jey Sing, which, later, under the reign of the most fantastic of tyrants, beheld the apotheosis of the immortal Ras Caphoor, a Moslem dancer who was madly loved by the king and whose name means Corrosive Sublimate. She was everything in the State; she used Jey Sing's algebraical manuscripts for curl-papers; and, when her lover was deposed and separated from her and cloistered in his palace, he had storey built upon storey, terrace upon terrace, up into the clouds, a wild, mad edifice from the top of which, perhaps, he might hope to see the prison of the well-beloved. What would one not give to find one of those coins which—an unparalleled fact—the king had struck with the concubine's effigy, a delicate and perfect monument of intoxicated despotism, a bewitching idea on the part of an ironical tyrant and, for the woman, a triumph equal to that of the conqueror, a satisfaction beside which none other could appear enviable to her.

Wander through those wide streets, those salmon-coloured houses, those ramparts painted with great flowers, those palace-yards with their frescoes of frenzied gods, those gardens, those squares where the Rajput horseman rides past on his stallion with the gaudy trappings, his curved tulwar at his side

(here, everybody carries arms), his beard parted and plastered down on either cheek, an aigrette of precious stones on his forehead. He loves opium, hunting, beautiful swords and beautiful women. He keeps his sworn word and the boast of a wonderful past. No Iliad but pales beside the stories of love and death that go to make up the annals of the Rajasthan. And this proud and loyal people is just simply the last aristocracy (I mean with strict warranties of purity of blood), the last aristocracy left on earth.

Here, up this lane is a quail-fight: heavy wagers are laid. A huntsman stops his walk with the leather-masked cheetah which he is leading in a leash, in order to follow the catastrophes of the contest. Near the cages in which the hunting-lynxes are kept, a falconer stands with a gerfalcon on his wrist: it wears no hood, but its lids are sewn together with a thread. An elephant, its tusks hooped with gold, passes amid the waving of delicately-tinted draperies that flap against its rugose flanks. A collar of silver plates jingles round its neck as it comes through a crushed-strawberry gate with white turrets cut out against the crude sky in a proud and graceful outline. There is a diapered grace over all these things, a delicate, heroic and light gaiety. Domes fly up, like bubbles, from the top of an unreal building that springs from the ground and spreads out in the happy light like a mad convolvulus. It is the Hall of the Winds: the diaphanous and fleeting air plays at its ease amid this fairy palace, half cloud and half

flower. The Hall of the Winds—the name is all-sufficient—answers so well to what one expected in this Jeypore of unforeseen and gallant poetry: one of the beautiful things of the East, set amid its courts full of gigantic instruments—gnomons, sun-dials, quadrants — with which Jey Sing, the illustrious mathematician, despot, drunkard and murderer, observed in the sky the fickle star and the belvederes of florid marble where the marvellous Corrosive Sublimate languished a prisoner. And this is more or less the impression that remains of Jeypore the unforgettable: a star-gazer's dream touched up by a dancing-girl.

3

The crocodiles in the pond of the royal park are fed at five o'clock.

It is at the end of the large Persian garden, which is formal and charming with its coloured-marble walks, its canals of running water, its tulips and its pomegranates, amid the eternal sound of the grating water-wheels, so familiar in the East. To satisfy our European senses nothing is wanting but a little grass under the trees, for the ground at their feet is all mud and the English lawn is a thing which neither the poets nor the lovers of these torrid skies have ever known.

On the lower steps of a stairway that runs down to the lake, a man utters a strange call. And, soon, eight scaly snouts appear above the water: they come from the three banks and each forms the top

of an angle, an angle of two diverging ripples of water. The Hindu teases the monsters with a bit of gristle at the end of a string. Great jaws open, show their whitey depths, the throat obstructed by a valvular glottis. The small eye gleams under the rocky eye-lid. One of the brutes climbs a step, almost snaps off the man's foot: he escapes with a jump and hits the snub nose with his stick. I do the same with the end of my cane. And yet they are sacred beasts: but the gods are passing!

And, slowly, the royal alligators swim back to the muddy banks and the stone ledges of the islands. They are dreaming, perhaps, of the palmy days of the race of the Kuchwahas, their masters, and of the nights of love and murder when, sometimes, the gift of a sultana would reach them, with a great scream, through the windows of the riverside zenana.

And the long ripples fill with stars on the twilit water, over which flutter the frightened water-fowl.

CHAPTER V

MOSLEM INDIA—OLD DELHI

I

Islam has no doubt seen its best days. It had begun to die under its motionless standards. Its law of eternal adventure, founded on the nomadic instincts of its first adherents, admirably exploited and stimulated by the Prophet, made movement a vital necessity to it. It was a prodigious engine of war, which repose was bound to rust and which now still raises its tragic, but no longer threatening outline.

The invasions had their stages at which, after the sacred fatigues of victory, the conquerors founded an empire and a civilization. Those stages were Bagdad, Constantinople, Granada, Delhi. There, amid the sumptuous leisures of power, amid the almost divine spells with which they were girt about, amid the very dangers that doubled the value of the brief hour, amid whims anticipated and passions gratified, the Moslem emperors realized a few superlative forms of pride and voluptuousness. It is especially at the two extremities of Islam, in Spain and India, that

we find the monumental evidences still remaining of a greatness consecrated and absolved by works of beauty. The Alhambra at Granada and the Taj at Agra fix the Moslem genius, at that exquisite date at which it becomes conscious of itself, that is to say, begins to doubt, feels its faith grow feebler and stoops to clasp life with all the transport of afflicting passion. Before that, the mosque, the minar, the gate of victory had proclaimed the creed and the pride of the ancestors in such architectural marvels as the Giralda at Seville, the Kutb Minar at Delhi or the triumphal arch of Fatehpur-Sikri.

India displays an unequalled wealth of monuments of Moslem architecture at every period. The lack of originality frequently ascribed to them, as, in particular, by M. Maurice Maindron in his remarkable work, *L'Art indien*, may be regarded as an additional attraction. Three races touch one another in this complex art: the Arabs, the Persians and the Hindus. What could be more striking than this contact taken by the pick of human groups till then foreign to one another and taken in the emotion and expression of beauty, especially when that emotion is rendered in definite works? One feels something similar on seeing an ornamental motive of the Renascence outlined among the incrustations of the Taj, or the immortal acanthus-leaf flourishing on a capital dug up in the north of the Punjab: an artistic sensation of the purest order, for there is thought mingled with it. We here dimly divine humanity preparing for future peace, for the days of reciprocal intelligence

which we must dream of while awaiting the coming of love; we here foresee beauty working prodigies by bringing together, first, the elect and, then, the crowd; here, noble perspectives undulate towards the infinite.

Michelet understands something of the same kind when he writes, in *La Bible de l'humanité*, at the end of the story of Firdusi, the great Persian national poet, honoured and then disowned by Mahmud of Ghazni, the first Moslem conqueror of India:

"Is this a digression? A thoughtless reader might be tempted to say so, whereas, on the contrary, it is the essence of the subject, its soul. This soul of Persia . . . stubbornly returns, three thousand years after Zoroaster, and, against all expectation, freshens the Moslem spirit and inundates it with its rich goodness and its fertile inspiration."

What would he not have added in the presence of this union of the ancestral Aryan soul and young Islam, a union wrought in the deep womb of Hinduism, dignified by its secular gravity and its metaphysical mystery, manifested in spirit and in monuments, under the most complete form, in the generous eclecticism of an Akbar!

We know but very little those works ot a vanished art, comparable with the most beautiful of the West and having, besides, the mystery of the foreign soul that is theirs. The races of men have as yet nothing really in common save their fatalities. There is here

the revelation of a new beauty, of an ideal very different from our Greek ideal, fed on other sources, accessible, nevertheless, in a certain measure, to our imagination, because of the Aryan influences which it has undergone and of its common Semitic origin with that of the religious system of which the morality remains ours, if not the dogma: the Turanian ideal, we might venture to say, stimulated by Arab genius and penetrated with that of Iran.

2

The Moslem invasion was effected at the beginning, in the first impetuous dash, by the shortest way, the sea. Fifteen years after the death of the Prophet, the first Mohammedans set foot on the coast of Bombay. In 1193, Muhammed, of the house of Ghor, in Afghanistan, swept down upon Delhi and Ajmere, under cover of dissensions among the Rajput chiefs, and took possession of them. He established as his viceroy at Delhi one of his lieutenants, Kutb-ud-din, by birth a slave, who, on the death of his master, proclaimed himself sovereign of Hindustan, Soon after the conquest there sprang from the soil the mosque of Kutb'ul Islam, that of Ajmere and. probably, the monument that expresses better than any in the world the pride and intoxication of victory, the Kutb Minar.

This triumphal tower, 240 feet high, whose name recalls that of its founder and also means North Star, rises at the outer angle of the Mosque of

Kutb'ul Islam, on the very site of the Hindu town of King Rai Pithora, which was pitilessly razed to the ground by the victors. Its beauty, its fascination, its appearance of having been built to bear the trophies of an unperishable dominion have caused it to be claimed by the Hindus. There is a legend which pretends that Rai Pithora built it that his daughter might see the Jumna from the top of it. There is nothing to corroborate this supposition. I have visited the tower of Chitor, which is the most famous of the similar monuments built by the Hindus. Erected at an interval of two centuries from each other, granting that they were the work of the same race, the Rajputs, they ought to bear the impress of a common genius. Now, while the one, sculptured from foot to summit, lingers and dallies with pompous balconies, with entwined gods, bursts into blossom, teems, swarms, a marvel of chivalrous and careless grace, the Moslem minar soars on high in a stern and ardent flight, tense, obstinate and passionate. Its five balconies do not break its pure lines of pink and amber sandstone melting up towards the blue sky, but each, on the contrary, seems the stage of a new flight. The ornamentation, which is irreproachable and perfect, because destined for God, is sober, for the believer has no time to spare: the whole universe does not yet confess the greatness of the One Allah. In a word, the inspiration of the Kutb seems purely Moslem and it is nonsense (or the refinement of a somewhat

weary æsthete) to suppose that this virile pedestal was intended only to carry in mid-sky the languors of a princess oppressed by the summer heat.

The minar owes its admirable lightness to the convex flutes, alternately circular and angular, which mould it up to the top of the third storey. From there, the tower tapers up as a cylinder of white marble, interrupted by a penultimate balcony. The ordering and the contrast of the hollows and reliefs, the play of the light and shade accentuating the sharp corners, gliding over the round surface, filling up the empty spaces: everything gives the impression of an incomparable artistic success. Green parrakeets wheel round on a background of pale-red stone and white sky. Between the balconies, belts bearing heroic and religious inscriptions circle the tower like the hoops of a piece of ordnance. The tall Cufic characters seem to trace their formulas in yatagan-blades and one recognizes in what they proclaim the language which those stones were meant to hold. The sacred suras of the Koran alternate with the grandiloquence of commemorative words. The victor calls himself "the ally of the Amir-ul-Momenin" (the caliph of Bagdad). They mention the Kaaba, the Mosque of El Aksa at Jerusalem, which profanes the very spot where the Temple of Solomon stood, and one suddenly understands the prodigious unity in which the might of Islam confirms itself. Then, as they hover higher above the ground, the inscriptions become exalted, the voices sound more threatening

in the purer air, pride becomes intoxicated as the horizon recedes:

"Hail! . . . Shadow of God! . . . Thy foot on the neck of the nations! . . . Firmament of the Faith of the Pure! . . ."

3

From the top, one discovers an extraordinary view. Sixty square miles of ground are almost hidden under ruins. What is the desolation of the Roman Campagna beside this? In this plain, like the capricious river that here so often changed its bed, the ebb and flow of humanity has rolled in confusion. Thirteen cities—it is possible to count fifteen—sleep there, some under a ruined fort, others under shapeless stones, a strip of friable earth, where the greedy grass shoots between the potsherds: Indraprastha, Dilli, Lalkot, Rai, Pithora, Kilogheri, Siri, Tughlakabad, Ferozabad, Khyzrabad, Mubarakabad, Sher Gahr, Shah Jehanabad, on the west of which stretches modern Delhi! Here the sons of the races descended from the moon fought the epic battles of the Mahabharata, at the time of Nineveh and the Exodus. The skulls of seventy-five thousand enemies were walled up in the foundations of this citadel. At our feet, Timur Bey, for three days, massacred the conquered before the black banner that still rests at Samarkand, under the blue dome where sleeps the murderer of seventeen million men. Here is the tomb of his descen-

dant, the Emperor Humayun, who died while seeking in the sky a lucky star; that of the old prophet Nizam-ud-din, who founded the homicidal brotherhood of the Thugs, next to that of the poet Khusrau, "the parrot of Hindustan," before whom the *nautchnis* still come to scatter flowers and dance.

There is not a spot in the world whence more human passion has lifted its voice to death. On certain days, a scorching wind raises a reddish cloud on the horizon, the dust of empires, one would say, through which one almost spies the lances of marching armies. The Jumna shimmers around its sand-banks, behind the terrifying mass of Tughlakabad. On the north, the red sandstone towers of Delhi Fort blossom into marble pavilions. And, leaping with an exultant bound towards the steel-grey sky, the tower of Kutb-ud-din, amid its proud inscriptions, mounts towards the sun.

CHAPTER VI

THE MOSQUE OF KUTB'UL ISLAM—THE RUINS OF TUGHLAKABAD

I

The Mosque of Kutb'ul Islam, which at one time contained the minar within its walls, is the oldest of the Indian mosques. Time and destruction have left only its wonderful remains. They stand round the famous Iron Pillar, in which the victor seemed to see and consecrate a mysterious beacon of future conquests. No doubt, that column of massive metal, twenty-two feet high and covered with unknown characters, was already, much earlier, a venerable riddle. It was protected by legends which, despite their heterodox nature, were bound to impress a man of the East. It was narrated that the sacred pillar pierced the head of Saher Naga, the serpent-king, whose convulsions, if he were set free, would shake the earth. The Nagas, divinities half men and half snakes, belong to the oldest aboriginal traditions : I have assisted at the rites which are still celebrated on the banks of the sources of Kashmir, their last retreats. Even so the cult of the nymphs did

not disappear from Christian countries until the middle ages. The Moslem, doubtless dreading some formidable jinn, respected the Iron Pillar and made it the centre of the court of his mosque, while around it twenty-seven idolatrous temples were destroyed before giving their columns to the *liwân* of the new sanctuary.

The inscriptions on the pillar have been deciphered, but have only made the mystery yet more remote. The obscure words display the names of fabulous kings. But it is ever the same lyricism trusting in the memory of men and vigilant eternity. Who is that prince "who, having swum across the seven mouths of the Sindhu (Indus), defeated the Balhikas in battle, the breezes of whose prowess still waft incense to the South Sea?" No one knows. Erudition stammers barbaric syllables. The rest has perished.

The original mosque presented the majestic and simple plan of the first Moslem buildings of this kind: a rectangular court, closed by columned galleries; a fountain in the middle, in memory of the sacred well of the Kaaba, where Ismail's thirst was slaked; in the middle of the west wall, in the direction of Mecca, the mihrab, the empty, the eloquently empty niche, so wonderfully expressive of mystery and abstraction, towards which the faithful turn and which makes of each mosque, in those true words of M. Albert Gayet, "however far removed it be, the vestibule of one only temple."

The glory of the mosque is the magnificent line of

arches that formed for it a sort of colossal rood-loft. A central arch, over fifty feet high, flanked on either side by two smaller ones, first lifted its proud ogive opposite the mihrab. Altamsh repeated the motive again to the left and right, in this way constructing a sort of screen pierced by thrice five openings, the effect of which—a purely showy effect, for the screen supported nothing and stood considerably higher than the roof of the *liwâns*—must have been to represent the extraordinary mass of a triumphal arch of fifteen bays straddling over the court-yard and the cloisters. Only the central portion still remains. A tracery of delicate sculptures covers the front and winds behind the Arab characters in the grace at once luxuriant and orderly of its floral fantasy.

A more profound study would no doubt reveal the Hindu origin of the motives that peep out through the sacred texts. Already we have India, immense, irreducible, pressing against the bars of her new gaol. The frailer Coptic art, after giving its elements to Arab art in Egypt, took pleasure and rested in the luminous precision of the horizons, once the inspirers of the pylons and terraces of Memphis and Thebes, as in the dryness of the air and the unchangeable return of the phenomena of nature: it attained its highest consciousness here; but no dogma, no tradition can ever prevail against India, with her innumerable gods, those interlaced forms which reappear, which teem, which rave, an Olympus of the jungle, a frantic, impatient life, overflowing on every side,

horrible, admirable, ever inordinate; India who, instead of fruitful sands or nutrient mud, flings into the ocean her rotting and prodigal deltas, too fluid, too restless, full of roaring vigour and uncontrollable energy.

2

I have mentioned the House of Tughlak. Its old citadel, to the south-west of the Kutb, lies outside the visitor's route. Few travellers know it. Nevertheless, no other ruin in the world, perhaps, is able to communicate a mightier sensation. Here, briefly, is its story.

In 1320, Ghyas-ud-din Tughlak, a Turcoman slave who had become governor of the Punjab, overthrew the Hindu renegade who had succeeded to the throne of 'Ala-ud-din. In two years, we are told, he built the fort of Tughlakabad, a regular city, which was inspired by the entrenched camps where, in their native steppes, his nomadic ancestors were used to shelter their herds and their women, camps afterwards reproduced by the Mogul emperors in the forts of Agra and Delhi.

His son, Muhammad bin Tughlak, on his return from an expedition into Bengal, gave him a review and, as the elephants passed, the craftily-contrived platform on which the old king stood gave way and buried him under its joists. The parricide, on mounting the throne, realized one of the most finished types of tyrants known to history. Cultured, artistic, religious and temperate, he gives the

impression not of a brute, a Commodus, but of a more manly Nero. Ibn Batuta tells of his love of making presents and shedding blood. His cruelty was less of a sport than an art. For the rest, his Cæsarean caprices knew no bounds. He ordered all the people of Delhi, under pain of death, to migrate to Dogiri, eight hundred miles away. Thousands of men perished of famine and the undertaking came to nothing. He sent an army of a hundred thousand soldiers against China, one hundred thousand men of whom not one recrossed the gorges of the Himalayas. The taxes were increased ten-fold; a rebellious general was flayed alive, another trampled to death by elephants. Villagers took to the jungle, became brigands. During this time, the monarch went man-hunting for sheer love of the sport, accompanied by whole armies to act as beaters, slaughtered the populations of great cities, restoring the degenerate pleasures of the chase to their first, logical form. It is stated that, on the death of him who is still called the Bloody Sultan, his successor, Feroz Shah, bought receipts of pardon, duly initialled, from all who had lost a nose or a limb by order of the late king. They filled a great trunk which was placed at the head of his tomb.

One sinister evening, in a hellish wind, I determine to do the six miles that separate the Kutb dak-bungalow from the ruins of Tughlakabad. The vast horizon is livid with dust, as though fleeing hordes were galloping all around, and the setting sun looks

a dull copper behind the volutes of the simoom. Before me, the walls of the uninhabited city loom large and, on the top of the rock on which it stands, raise the battlements of their truncated conic towers a hundred feet above the plain. The mpression of massiveness is, at first, crushing. The town is four miles round. It resembles the first layer of an unfinished Babel. The rock bears on its surface blocks of stone weighing six tons, which themselves overlap ripped-open walls, the colour of grey night and ashes, the perspective of which diminishes and is rendered fantastic by a ray of yellow which picks out a piece of it. A fierce, distrustful outline, which contains the horror of summits struck by lightning, which conjures up the rebel savagery of a castle of Cain, the rudeness and passion of a house built by bad angels for the daughters of giants. You clamber by escarpments strewn with huge ashlars till you come to a ruined barbican. From there, you reach the topmost point of what was the citadel, the heart where beat the terrible will by which all these dwellings were begotten of this granite donjon. A hare flees among the rubbish, the tufts of wild beans, the shrubs on the walls, whose thin prickles protect their purple flowers. From the top, you see the half-hexagon of the ramparts, you look down into the cisterns, you follow the roads around. The remains of a mosque, of a palace stand out more clearly. Underground tunnels are hollowed out. The eye wanders along gloomy passages, between empty houses. On every hand there is a sense of

fear, of dreaded treason, the indelible soul of the slave-king walled-up alive in its strength and in its terror.

Below, in the middle of a dried-up lake, which used to reflect the citadel—its dike now lies crumbling there, on the east—stands the sultan's tomb, built by the piety of the parricide son, who afterwards dared to lay himself by his father's side. It stands in red sandstone and yellow marble on a pentagonal eyot. A bridge under whose arch the soil accumulates in running mud joins it to the mainland. The round, massive mausoleum, with sloping walls, copies, despite its surbased dome, the appearance of an Egyptian pylon and the soberness of its ornamentation produces as great an effect as the bareness of the walls of the citadel. It could withstand sieges. Thus the despot fortifies his death after his life and, in his unsure tomb, abdicates nothing, says no to dissolution, hardly feels time loosen the imperious lip or the hand clutching the sword-hilt, continues to challenge and to reign from the depths of his proud dust. What a professor of individualism was that monster!

This military sepulchre has justly been termed unrivalled. I can compare with it, at least as a site, none save the mausoleum of Birsing Deo, the hero of Bundelkund, at Orchha, in Central India. The great swell of the Betwa comes, over the remains of an overturned mole, to lick its base and the dry mud cracks in summer around the funeral stones: a grand music for a conqueror's sleep, the same that

for fourteen centuries has lulled Alaric in the Sicilian bed of the Busento.

Around the dry lake stand other, almost as imposing ruins, the chief of which is 'Adilabad, the fort of Sultan Muhammad. The rest is desert, aridity, an immense plain, more sinister in the troubled glimmer of the darkened sun which is about to disappear behind the Kutb than the landscape of the Dead Sea itself in the hard light of Judæa. Those remains are sublime. And yet they recall but one hour of the prodigious annals, one page of the colossal epic that is the history of India: they are still too paltry to mark worthily in the fields of oblivion the place where lie so much human will, beauty and sorrow.

CHAPTER VII

THE VERSAILLES OF AKBAR THE GREAT—FATEHPUR-SIKRI

I

WITH Akbar, we leave Delhi for Agra, or rather Fatehpur-Sikri, the capital which he made to spring up around the hermitage of the pious Salim Chisti and from which he governed his empire during fifteen years. Abandoned for strategic reasons or because of the lack of water, it still crowns its rock, without having suffered too much, comparatively speaking, from the ravages of time, and there exists, perhaps, no monumental whole that is more homogeneous and more expressive nor one that more liberally reveals a master personality. It is a more complete creation than Versailles in this sense, that subsequent reigns have added nothing to it. And Versailles displays one fault of taste—the only one—that of repeating indiscreetly the servile apotheosis of a personality which was certainly imposing by the sense of its prerogative and its dignity, but which was intellectually limited and devoid of philosophy and human anxiety. How differently

ample is the character of an Akbar! What a lesson is his eclecticism for a contemporary like Philip II. or for the monarch of the *Dragonnades* a century later! All this race of the Timurids shows a profound conception of destiny, of universal vanity, a conception touching to see in these elect or these scourges of God and one whose fatalism, whether ironical or grave, often, thanks to the majesty of the accent, equals the stoicism of a Marcus Aurelius. Timur, receiving Bajazet a prisoner in his tent, bursts into laughter. The emperor is surprised, asks a question:

"It is because I am thinking," answers the Mogul, "that, in thirty years, we shall both be dead, the victor and the vanquished."

Babar, in his candid and terrible Memoirs, between the story of a night of love and wine and the episode of a "minaret of skulls" built on some evening of battle, tells us that he wept at the scent of a Kabul melon which reminded him of his country. Akbar covers with phrases expressive of disillusionment the prodigious triumphal gate of Fatehpur-Sikri. Aurungzeb, on his death-bed—Aurungzeb the fanatic abhorred by the Hindus!—writes:

"I have no knowledge of myself, who I am, or for what purpose I am."

And he thus ends his will:

"The contracted thoughts of women bring nothing but discontentment. Farewell! Farewell! Farewell!"

His father, Shah Jehan, before him, had built and

dedicated to love that farewell of marble, of flowers, of melancholy and dreams which is the Taj of Agra.

Akbar the Great towers over his line by all the height of his moral preoccupations and of the work achieved. His most marked feature is perhaps his religious dilettantism. He presided over a veritable congress of religions at Fatehpur. A solution was gravely demanded of the eternal problems by the same restlessness of a tyrant-philosopher that resolves itself elsewhere into the epicurean and sceptic dilettantism of a Hadrian. But the oriental had known action, had steeped his meditation in it and did not consider that his labour could be repaid by anything less than a certainty. Did he find it? We do not know. It would seem that, in the last resort, he sought it within himself; orthodox believers reproached him, at the end of his life, with not refusing to receive divine homage: a sufficiently logical conclusion of overloaded pride. Or else, can we believe, judging by certain signs (a Hindu sanctuary near the palace of the Rajput ranee, a fresco of the Annunciation on the walls of the house presumed to be that of his Christian wife), that, like the king of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs, he embraced the creeds of the women whom he had loved best, a melting renunciation of wisdom growing old in the presence of eternal voluptuousness? . . .

Has any one ever traced the psychology of the despot? It would be difficult to imagine a more tragic or a more profoundly interesting study. The advance of the modern world has almost eliminated

the type of domineering humanity, with its sovereign caprices, with its almost infinite possibilities in the field of human faculties. Is it one day to reappear at the top of a scale of new values, rich in multiplied possibilities, as the master of the real keys of happiness and beauty? . . .

While waiting for it, let us try to disentangle the soul of one of its most illustrious predecessors, if not in the uncertain memory of his acts, at least through the august remains of his attempted ideal.

2

The buildings of Fatehpur-Sikri cover the surface of a plateau which levels the top of a red sandstone ridge. The latter stands in the middle of an immense plain, at twenty-two miles from Agra, and raises its imperial acropolis, the lines of which, crowned by the mass of the great triumphal arch, invite and follow the traveller at a distance. An artificial lake bathed its foundations and the continuous grating of the water-wheels for the service of the baths and terraces used to frighten the birds in the reeds on the opposite shore. A too-wide enclosure hangs on the flank of the hill, like a baldrick no longer stretched by the weight of the sword. On the other side, it descends the gentle slopes and runs, until fastened in a knot by a ruined gate, around a great extent of plain, which is thus fixed to the mount which shelters it and in which nothing has remained intact. The palace and the pavilions on the hill are still, on

the other hand, erect, having been built, for the most part, on the Hindu technical principles, without vaults or framework, in placid layers and broad slabs of wrought stone.

That is the most striking feature in this town conceived, developed and almost completed in the imagination and the will of one man: its character resolutely conforming with the traditions of the conquered nation. The conquerors assert themselves in only one building, for that matter incomparable: the mosque.

Akbar, a Persian on his mother's side, always showed a partiality for the culture and the language of that Greece of the East. But, in matters of architecture proper, he deliberately drew upon Hindu sources, for political reasons, thus consecrating his rupture with his native land. The disposition of the tombs of the Timurid princes is significant on this point: the ancestor lies at Samarkand; Babar wished his body to be carried back from Agra to Kabul; Humayun is at Delhi; Akbar at Sikandarah; Shah Jehan at Agra.

An oriental palace consists of isolated buildings, generally of small dimensions, between which the air is able to circulate, the flowers to blossom. The necessities of the climate, the practice of polygamy require this. Sitting at the foot of the Khwabgah, or "House of Dreams," the private apartments of Akbar, whose little bed-chamber has Persian verses inscribed over the inner architraves of the doors and traces of frescoes on the walls, I have before me

the Khas Mahal, a veritable court of marble, around which are arranged the different edifices in which Akbar attended to the sovereign and private functions of his life. At my feet, a bason of green water shows, in its middle, a square island of stone, on which carpets were flung in summer: it is connected with the four sides by four narrow, sculptured bridges. Red steps lead down into the water. Further away, a marble throne, with no back to it, fashioned for the squatting attitude among the cushions, enabled the master to follow on a large chess-board, still visible in the pavement of the esplanade, the evolutions of the young slave-girls who took the place of the coloured ivory pieces. At the end is the Diwan-i-Khas, or Council-chamber, near the little structure reserved for the Hindu theologian; on the right, the house, carved like a gem, of the Turkish sultana; on the left, the Panch Mahal, with its superposed terraces and its many columns, where the queens used to come to wait for the night breezes. Outside the court, looking over the western wall, is the house of Miriam, the mysterious Portuguese wife, with its peeling frescoes, among which is a group that strangely suggests the classic subject of the Annunciation. Thus did repose, dominion, religion and love rhythmically fill that beautiful life.

It is difficult to imagine a more picturesque conception than that of the Diwan-i-Khas. A central pillar, whose exquisite carvings recall, by a perhaps voluntary coincidence, the ornaments of the tomb of the emperor at the top of that mausoleum of Sikan-

darah, itself, one would say, conceived in a recollection of the terraces of the Panch Mahal, where the princesses used to come to sleep, spreads into an immense circular capital. From this capital, four balconies, with low open trellis stone balustrades, diverge to the corners of the pavilion, where secondary platforms communicate with the ground by staircases. The emperor, like a god in the cup of a lotus-flower, sat in the centre of the corbelled capital; a minister occupied each of the angles; through the bays, either open or closed with screens of interlaced stone, the eye discovers the whole of the wide and almost perfectly circular horizon. The will of the master here radiated like a glowing hearth to the four corners of the sky, shot forth to the confines of the empire; and I know no more poetic realization of a will of power and responsibility.

The proximity of a stone canopy hewn in evident imitation of the Jain temples of the twelfth century—a canopy which, according to tradition, used to shelter the Hindu teacher with whom Akbar loved to converse—has given rise to the thought that the Diwan-i-Khas used to serve as a theatre for those religious discussions, the cause of such great scandal to the rigid ulemas, in which, in the twilight, the gods were heard passionately pleading through the voices of the wise men: Agni, the fire-god; the Zoroastrian divinities; Siva, who procreates and devours; Buddha, god of infinite pity; while no less a hearing was granted to a lean, dark monk, with the crucifix of the companions of Francis Xavier round his neck

and a Portuguese accent that brought a smile to the lips of his audience, who spoke in the name of Isa, Son of David, Who died to save mankind. Over these walls, red-gold in the sunset, where, since two centuries, the voices of the great have been silent, the air was heavy with sacred utterances.

The Diwan-i-'Am, with its flat-roofed cloister, where the emperor dispensed his justice in public, closes the court on the east. The house of the Turkish Queen touches it almost: a gem of sculpture spreading on every side into a net-work of arabesques, with flowers set in them, over the whole surface of the outer pillars, the walls and the ceiling. The wall-space is hollowed out in shelved recesses, where the women used to lay the jewels, the gold and enamelled hookas, the dice of jade with ruby spots with which they whiled away the tedium of the day. Below these, a set of panels displays in relief a whole animal and forest life, where Hindu exuberance is modified with Chinese quaintness and mingles willows, palms, vines, heavy fruits with Tartar dragons and with the wild or winged beasts of the Himalayas.

I receive the privilege of lodging in the house of Rajah Birbal, the first of the emperor's Hindu favourites. This little palace, standing on a raised platform, with its two storeys of carved sandstone, is a finished model of the style of Fatehpur-Sikri, the richness of the decoration relieving any heaviness or squatness in this construction, which contains not so much as a peg of wood nor any course other than the

horizontal and which realizes an appearance of grace and refinement by means of blocks of stone of almost cyclopean dimensions. My room, on the ground-floor, is square and has four similar doors, between rectangular pillars, on which geometrical patterns are contained within borders of vegetal arabesques. The top of each door is formed by two supports in the form of a machicolation, projected by the two pillars and united, without touching each other, by an architrave laid flatwise. They carry the cusps so characteristic of Hindu architecture and, two and two, delineate a small arch which is repeated all round the room, framing both the full panels and the open bays. Above runs a frieze of alveoli joined to the long slabs that form the ceiling by a line of glandular ovolos. A delicate tracery on those slabs relieves their austerity. The oriental, when his dreams are not lost in the distances of the dome, loves to let them wander among the geometrical variegations of a fine ceiling: this is the luxury of recumbent people, the idleness of the heavenly kief.

3

The great mosque proudly towers over the south-western escarpment of Akbar's acropolis.

A courtyard of about one hundred and twenty yards long by one hundred and fifty wide is flagged with white marble, whose smooth and dazzling surface, so religious and grave in its expression, is interrupted only by the ritual bason, a double-domed mausoleum

clad in airy marbles and the foliage of a few trees. The last often grow through the rough pavements of the mosques, where their grace, their tenderness of frail, leafy things seems necessary to relax the too naked meditation, the intense and painful ecstasy fixed upon the forehead of the Eternal.

The porticoes that surround the immense rectangle are divided into cells. That at the back, which forms the sanctuary, is crowned by three domes, of which the two side ones rest on columns of a Hindu pattern. The middle one is joined to the quadrangular walls that support it by superb pendentives, forming an octagonal section, which, dividing itself into a sixteen-sided polygon, ends by wedding the circumference of the base of the dome. This even, geometrical progression, the simplest of all, majestic, balanced, might appear ingenuous, were it not for the boldly pentagonal plan of the stalactites, the dissonance of a great master, soon resolved in the soft spherical harmony of the cupola.

M. Gayet,* in a theory which is much too attractive not to be true, has depicted Arab art a prey to what he calls "its morose delectation," pursuing its ideal through the ordered maze of an ingenious polygonousness. The most impassioning notions of philosophy—the Becoming, eternity, the inevitable return (the prophecy of which burnt the lips of Zarathustra)—would weave its mystic woofs: a dream of essential beauty reduced to its pure numbers, stripped of perishable forms, free of change and pain.

* *L'Art arabe*, pp. 180–182.

Therefore the polygons radiate, unite, first on plane surfaces, then erected in space, sunk in the depths, enriched with a world of new combinations. They do not only trace an idle decoration: they express themselves in an infinitely varied language, a music of lines and forms, with ever new rhythms, the scale of whose numbers would be the infinite gamut. When we continue to ponder on this theme and on the generalizations of which it allows, when we admit the chimera of an æsthetic system of this sort that has become conscious, we stand surprised at its possibilities. We have architecture, the most practical of the arts, ravished beyond the needs of utility, making sport of the fatalities of matter, gravitating, as the intoxicated harbinger of new initiations, towards the spheres of pure emotion where, alone, beauty henceforth signifies truth or wisdom. In sculpture or painting, we have, first of all, enfranchisement. Art frees itself of its simian task, the legacy of humble ancestors; it ceases to *copy:* an unprecedented revolution, preluded, perhaps without their own knowledge, by the Arabian architects, which would change the axis of the æsthetic world; a flight towards the uncreated, not far from the exhausted forms, but through those very forms, penetrated, illumined from within by their resplendent laws: the formula-forms; an apparent rupture with nature according to the Ruskinian canon, but, in truth, a differently intimate and exalting possession of nature in her most mysterious mystery and her most

jealous delights! Science and art would work out their marvellous synthesis at a height which we should not even have dreamt of and it would remain for us to crown with pious hands the sacred works at whose feet humanity, as yet a child, after quivering with youthful gladness, will venerate, in the fulness of its age, a promise even fairer than the lesson which it will have learnt from them.

This doubtless necessary crisis, which Islam, without its vicissitudes and less buttressed by its faith, would perhaps have effected, was so little foreseen by Akbar's architects that they covered the polyhedrical alveoli, overwhelmed the sharp herring-bone ridges, bound together the mystic traceries and their potentiality of indefinite expansion with all the leaves and all the flowers, from the lotus of the Ganges to the roses of Iran. Persian art, its smiling and facile graces were to seduce and delay Moslem art on the threshold of an extraordinary destiny. The anthropomorphous and imitative Aryan — of whom ancient Greece was the most perfect type— took the upper hand, bound captive the transcendental dreamery of the Semite: an admirable defeat, which we cannot bring ourselves to regret when we contemplate its vestiges.

If Persian polychromy does not yet then invade the exterior of the monument with a casing of many-coloured tiles (it will do so less than a century later and give us the delightful mosque of Vazir Khan at Lahore), it breaks out into mural paintings in the interior, covers the austere walls with gaudy

tapestry, softens with a languid sensuousness the severe love of the unimaginable God. The time of the great designs is past; the eye of faith is no longer fixed upon the promised horizons, but falls upon the flowers by the roadside. Man bends under his too-heavy will. His belief also, without admitting so much to itself, hesitates sometimes, dares to look at the hour beside eternity, at the creature over the uncreated: see the faithless heart of humanity, the old base wisdom, of which Omar Khayyam takes up the song after Horace, but in a more poignant manner than the amiable pensioner of Tivoli, inviting man to his brief joys from a much greater distance, from the very depths of pain and destiny.

The walls of the mosque are pierced by three gateways. One of these, the southernmost, did not form part of the original plan: it is really a triumphal arch, intended to celebrate the emperor's victories in Guzerat. This mass, one hundred and fifty feet high, the central arch opening upon a half-dome, the four minarets at the four corners of the trapezium that forms the plan, the broad steps that lead up to the entrance, the declivity in the ground continuing the slope of the steps make of this gate a monument unequalled in its kind. Seen from below, on the edge of the village whose humbled hovels are heaped up at the foot of the hill, the effect is sublime. It lies in the very disproportion between that titanic mass and its surroundings, in the proud upward leap of that stone canopy, whose minarets look like the poles that formerly, in the native

steppes, carried skins of beasts or motley carpets over the conqueror in state. I know only one other monument in which the verticals reach the same pitch of magnificence and that is Beauvais Cathedral. It is the same *Hosannah in excelsis!* For the rest, the Moslem epigraph, with so just a lyricism, exclaims:

"Its mihrab is like the broad-browed morning, its pinnacles like the Milky Way, its gate cries aloud! . . ."

A marvellous revelation, an inspired translation of the feeling that takes hold of you before that formidable arch, whence seems to issue as it were a shout of victory, continuous, louder than the trumpets of a hundred Fames, from the top of the pedestal that lifts it proudly on the horizon of Hindustan. And the great cry of pride rings out over the rich plains, the peaceful towns, the unsubdued jungle, to die away absorbed in the astonished murmur of the southern shores.

Then one thinks of other words, those whose threefold riband forms the rich rectangle in which, according to the almost invariable rite, the arch is cut out with an august simplicity. They say:

"The world is a bridge: pass over it, but build no house upon it. The world endures but an hour: spend it in prayer; who sees the rest? Thy greatest richness is the alms which thou hast given. Know that the world is a mirror where fortune has appeared, then fled: call nothing thine that thy eyes cannot see."

And mingled with the admiration of those pure lines, of that material grandeur, of that realized miracle of art is an element of thought, veneration and melancholy that makes up one of those rare sensations of completeness which time cannot impair in our memory and which we would buy at the cost of any exile.

From the top, amid the efflorescence of the domed turrets and the spear-heads of the minarets, through the skein of the swallows in the lowering sky, I see the village at my feet and, quite close, the old, crumbling baths. A transparent sheet of tin seems to close the horizon where the fort of Agra stands out on clear days. On the other side are the court of the mosque, the domes of the gates where whirls a flight of silky wings and, set in the middle, with its pavement flung down before it like a carpet, the tomb of the holy calender. And it is a tent, the rude tent of the pastoral migrations, between the days of Abraham and those of Mahomet, that reappears through the unreal lattice-work, the fretted marble screens of this tomb, set up by Azrael for the sleep of the just in the very shadow of the Justiciary.

CHAPTER VIII

THE OLD GARDENS OF KASHMIR

I

The obscure laws that rule the destinies of races seem to have transmitted from Timur to Akbar the same strong love of dominion, which became less vigorous as it grew more lucid, a brutal appetite for conquest that expanded into an organizing wisdom, which, nevertheless, was but a stage towards death. For the will to live, so powerfully resilient in each generation of the Timurid dynasty, seems to weaken from Akbar the Great onwards. Jehangir and Shah Jehan were not so much headstrong tyrants as contemplatives and voluptuaries. The treasure got together by the efforts of the ancestors demanded to be enjoyed, the heaped-up possibilities of delight —the tribute of two centuries of raiding and carnage —asked to be allowed to flourish. In Aurungzeb reappeared the atavistic fighting instinct, coloured with fanaticism. But this time it was against fate; the heroic ages were accomplished: after the son of Shah Jehan, the mighty line slipped away in phantoms.

The reign of Jehangir resembles a pastoral interlude. Abandoning the capitals, he fell in love with the valley of Kashmir. Persian poetry has exhausted its images in extolling that most delicious of all the world's regions, even as the Arabs lavished upon Damascus all the wealth of oriental lyrics. Whether you descend from Tibet and the central table-land of Asia, both so sterile and inhospitable, or come, through the unsafe passes of the Himalayas, from the burning plains of India, this basin of verdure is an enchantment, with its flowery lakes, its running wells, surrounded by snowy crests some of which rise five-and-twenty thousand feet into the sky.

From lake to lake, along the slow rivers, between giant trees whose branches graze the roofs of the floating houses, little islands of sand covered with flowering crops, at the point of which a heron stands on one leg and dreams, while around you the ring of glittering mountains that encloses the rich valley turns like a wheel; or else under the tents pitched at the will of caprice or time, on the brink of a torrent, on the skirt of a forest of cedars, at the bottom of a furrow hollowed out by an avalanche, filled with flowers and rustling with wings, whence, for hours, you will follow with your eyes the smoke of the nomads amid the birch-trees or the majestic circling of an eagle a thousand yards above your head against the glorious background of a silver glacier, it is sweet to live in this land, from spring that favours the iris to autumn fortunate in the lotus. For these

two blowings mark the seasons for the inhabitants of Kashmir. One opens beautiful jagged cups, white, sulphur or violet, over all the country-side and, by preference, around the low stones of the Moslem cemeteries. The other strews the clear waters of the three lakes and their floating gardens with great pink flowers, whose golden pistils, shaped like capitals, seem pedestals worthy of the pensive or ecstatic gods whom the legends seat there. Here men lead a life of languor and idleness, which nothing trammels, which everything retains, amid the sensuousness of moving water, of numberless perfumes, of an atmosphere so pure that the lines of things seem to be transfigured in it as in a magic ether that should dispense a beauty of its own and an unknown enchantment.

Now the Emperor Jehangir and the fair Nurmahal, his empress, were smitten with a fondness for the Happy Valley that lasted longer than life, so much so that the dying monarch asked to be moved to the brink of the great source at Vernag. Here, the Jhelum, which the companions of Alexander called Hydaspes, rises from the depths of the earth with a fine, plentiful rhythm, a magnificent stream mightily and amply swollen by the mysterious effort which men worshipped in their early terror and gratitude.

Following the roads familiar to the Great Moguls, one reaches the high valley of the Jhelum, from India, in fifteen days' march, with tents. The Moguls took three months over the journey. A city of canvas, a hundred thousand horsemen, fifty thousand men on

foot, as many functionaries, slaves and eunuchs, the whole retinue of the queens, princesses and favourites escorted them. The elephants sniffed the snow of the passes. At night, in front of the master's purple pavilion, a giant beacon signalled the sovereign will that moved this tumultuous mass, the soul of the horde. They travelled by short stages. There were two camps, so that one was always pitched on the arrival of the train. On the road, they hunted the wild-boar, the tiger, the lion even, which was then found in Hindustan, by means of nets, of armies of beaters or of a donkey drunk with opium that served as a bait.

Thus, at least, does Bernier show us the movements of Shah Jehan. Those of Jehangir seem to have had a simpler and more bucolic character. After the torrid plains of Agra and Delhi came an animal desire for green grass to sleep upon, rippling waters to listen to, blue horizons over snowy mounts to gaze upon, idly stretched on the cool sward, through the branches of flowering apple-trees. A serai of ornamented wood was erected on the brink of the lakes or fountains, sometimes on the current itself, visible through the miradors of the walls and the cracks of the boards, without pomp or state, under a grassy roof, calculated to lull hours of idyllic leisure with the sound, most delicious of all to eastern ears, of murmuring water. Such are Vernag and Atchibal to this day.

The gardens of Nishat Bagh and Shalimar belong to a later, a more voluptuous, a less exclusively

rural period. They taper their terraces under the mighty shades of the Mogul plane-trees along the shores of the Dal, the lake of Srinagar, a tepid, limpid sheet, with a grassy bottom, great rafts of rushes laden with vegetation—the famous floating gardens—intersected by low banks of grass and willows, with fantastic old bridges, flocks of water-fowl, pink lotuses on which kingfishers stand perched: the whole hemmed in by glorious mountains.

On the lower slopes of these mountains, the pleasure-gardens of the Padishahs, climbing in superposed platforms the gently-ascending hill which sends down upon them in successive falls the mass of its waters, reveal a whole aspect of the pensive, sensuous, pastoral soul of Islam. At the other end of its empire, under the western horn of the Crescent, another garden, that of the Alhambra, preserves the fame of one of the most seductive spots on earth. Both are halting-places of the Believer, palaces or tombs, retreats of voluptuousness or death, flowering limits placed by ironical fate to mark the will of man and the glory of God.

The Persian garden, with its love of orderly symmetry, its rectangular canals, its shrubs bordered with hewn stone, would incline one to believe that the majestic formalism of a Le Nôtre was an Aryan reminiscence. And our excuse for talking at such length of these ruined parks is that we surprise here, perhaps, the most intimate, the most secret part of the Moslem soul: the fulness of the absolute demanded of the extreme emotions of the flesh;

grave heroic languors in which strength lies dormant; latent energies inundated with passion and fatality; a sense, at once profound and simple, of short, vain life, powerfully and ardently hugged, in spite of all things, in the transport of an intoxicated anguish . . .

2

I shall always remember a supper given us by the brother of the Maharajah of Kashmir in the gardens of Shalimar. As on the gate of another Shalimar, at Lahore, the most typical, perhaps, of these imperial gardens, that one which reflects such marvellous ceramic ware in its melancholy canals, one might carve over the entrance that old Persian inscription:

> Sweet is this garden, through envy of which the tulip is spotted;
> The rose of the sun and moon forms its beautiful lamp.

The table was laid under a kiosk with black marble columns, in the middle of a square bason. From three sides of the square fell three cascades, whose sheet of mobile crystal was illumined by lamps set behind them in recesses. The fourth side opened out the perspective of a long canal bordered with lights, with a line of playing waters as an axis, the last of which ran out towards the lake in moonlit distances. Four other rows of spouting fountains in the bason itself raised as it were a forest of silver lances around the kiosk with its glittering

marbles. We were surrounded by the splashing, by the efficient coolness of the heavenly water, the glory of the consoling water, the feast and the apotheosis of water. Shiraz wine in inlaid jugs, Kabul melons, a book of songs and "the soft moon-face" of the *saki*, or cup-bearer (a slim cypress among the jasmine nudities of the sultanas): no more was needed, amid such a setting, by these great and candid artists in sensuousness.

Remote and closed as this soul of Islam remains, I doubt if we ever felt it nearer to us than that evening, among the fountains and the night-blossoms of the garden of Shalimar, while the full moon of August, from above the snows of the Tibetan frontier, poured down its clear light into the most beautiful valleys of the world.

CHAPTER IX

THE PALACES AT AGRA AND DELHI—THE TAJ MAHAL

I

Both the walled space of the fort of Agra and that of the palace of Delhi present a magnificent military setting. The high walls, faced with the pink sandstone that supplies the materials for Fatehpur-Sikri, lift their wide mitriform battlements at seventy feet above the ground. Moats thirty feet wide by five-and-thirty feet deep are obstructed with posterns, barbicans, defences which raise line upon line of battlements and embrasures, one above the other, before the counterscarps. Gates open behind their portcullises and drawbridges between octagonal towers, with skirts set off with white stone, each crowned with a dome and joined to the others by galleries of turrets. At Delhi, the Lahore Gate commands a huge arcade, a vaulted passage, lined with recesses and shops, forming a bazaar, at the end of which blossomed the esplanades, the gardens and the imperial marbles, in a distance that intensified imagination and desire.

From the defensive point of view, these glorious citadels, inspired, no doubt, by the architecture of our own middle ages—there was no lack of European adventurers to cast guns or build towers to the order of the Great Moguls—hardly count and did not oppose to the English guns, in 1857, the same resistance as that, for instance, of the mud ramparts of a Bhurtpur, into which Lord Lake's cannon-balls sank, scarce troubling the crocodiles in the moat. But I doubt whether any other fortress presents so great an appearance of knightly splendour, of proud and noble dignity, easily attaining the majestic without passing through the ferocious, or with a more sovereign grace crowns its red bastions with their lightly-poised crests of miniature columns and white domes.

Of the two palaces proper of Agra and Delhi, the former, as Fergusson very correctly says, is in somewhat better taste, but the second, if conceived as a whole, would have presented as complete a document on Shah Jehan as Fatehpur-Sikri on Akbar. Only scattered fragments are left, especially of the second. Am I to broach the chapter of the English devastations? One hesitates: the sincerest dispositions towards impartiality turn to bitterness; the inexpiable cries from the ruins and the soil. Of a mass of monuments that covered twice as great an area as the Escorial (the palace occupied within the fortress a parallelogram of 1000 yards long by 500 yards wide) nothing but ruins remains. The most eloquent indictment

of the vandalism of the destroyers has been pronounced by a British subject, Fergusson, the author of works on the defence of fortified places and an expert, who says that this unnecessary act of vandalism was performed deliberately, without strategic excuse and without the making a single plan of what was being destroyed. Strive as we may to remember that we have to do with the work of soldiers drunk and maddened with their sufferings in the Mutiny and with a doubtful triumph, that these things were perpetrated in the darkest days of that "Victorian era" in which ugliness and bad taste reigned on every throne; recollect as we will that all conquerors are alike and that, when all is said, the idealism of the dreamer has not yet found an idiom in which to call action sister: in spite of everything, I am of opinion that here a supreme crime has crowned the series of the attacks on beauty. Have the culprits gone so far as, I will not say to repent, but, simply, to conceive a notion of the heinousness of their crime? I doubt it. Did they not display a shade of iconoclastic coquetry in sending as viceroy to India a descendant of that Lord Elgin for whom ancient Greece would have widened the pillory of Herostratus?

2

Each of the two palaces contains a Diwan-i-'Am for public audiences and official state receptions; a Diwan-i-Khas for private receptions, at which

pleasure and magnificence ceased to hold count with the necessity for display and where luxury gave entertainments for its own benefit; the private apartments of the emperor; and, lastly, behind all the rest, against the rampart which it crowns with carved stone, the zenana of the princesses, caressed by the coolest breezes and reflected twenty yards below in the waters of the Jumna. And we must not forget the mosques, the oratories, the hammams, which play an important part, the esplanades for the reviews, the stone tilt-yards where the elephants used to fight, the terraces, the many gardens, the great wells with inner spiral galleries, which are found nowhere except in India and which afforded a shelter to the prince and the favourites in the great heats.

Almost all the white-marble surfaces are covered with those incrustations of precious materials the art of which, borrowed from Florence, was, we are told, brought to the Court of Shah Jehan by European artists. Lapis lazuli, jasper, bloodstone, chalcedony, cornelian, agate, onyx, different marbles, jade, turquoise, beryl, strewed the white marbles of the monuments of Shah Jehan with their fairy-like designs of flowers and twines. If this style of decoration lacks "the intellectual beauty of Greek ornament," at least we must allow that it possesses an incomparable richness and brilliancy, a different sort of lavishness, a more smiling sensuousness, without counting the fact that many tympanums of arches show vegetal or conventional scrolls of an exquisite grace of line in addition to a magical and varied

colouring the purity of which delights the immaculate surface of the marble that bathes them.

A love of jewels characterized the Mogul emperors at all times. Akbar caused to be placed at the head of his tombstone, on the last terrace of the Sikandarah mausoleum, on a small pillar of sawn marble, an extraordinary diamond, the Koh-i-Nur (which Nadir Shah was to carry off to Teheran less than two centuries later), as an offering to the sun. On the accession of the monarchs, cups full of precious stones were passed round their heads and afterwards distributed to the courtiers. In Shah Jehan, this taste developed into a passion, from which resulted that legendary Peacock Throne which was valued by a contemporary French jeweller at one hundred and fifty million francs and which must have offered anything but a commonplace symbol of royalty between its platform and its canopy of massive gold, on a dazzling background of plumage formed of rubies, sapphires and emeralds, under its umbrellas of crimson velvet embroidered and fringed with pearls. In the midst of these splendours, the master, himself clad in white garments covered with priceless gems, appeared as we see him in the old Persian miniatures, his forehead girt with a scarcely imaginary halo, holding a flower to his nostrils.

3

The weekly solemnity of the 'Am Khas displayed before the columned portico of the Diwan-i-'Am

processions of soldiers, dancers and beasts of battle. But the ceremonies of the Diwan-i-Khas probably carried the palm as the refinement of a more intimate luxury, which the building, a pavilion of white marble, open on its four sides, reveals in its more exquisite richness within its more imposing dimensions. The columns and arches are no longer of red sandstone, but of pure marble.

At Delhi, the Diwan-i-Khas raises its aerial mass, with its wide slanting eaves of marble, topped by four turrets, between an inner court and the rampart which it crowns and from which its bays closed with carved stone overlook the Jumna, its too-wide bed and the wealth of the riverside gardens, to-day dusty and wasted. Lean against that balustrade and, turning your back to the horizon, let your eyes wander through the square pillars relieved by the four little columns that flank them and the marvel of the decafoil arches (the smaller have six foils) with axe-edged arrises, which, by a happy thought, are divided into three sections deepwise, of which the middlemost is the deepest. The multiplication of these arrises and of these acute angles on different plans cuts up with a bold, unexpected, superlatively light and sumptuous grace the pieces of perspective that appear between the columns: crude sky, pale foliage or glittering ceiling. This ceiling, once of massive silver, the sheets of which went to swell Nadir Shah's booty, was valued by Tavernier at twenty-six millions of our money. It was replaced by another in wood. The decoration

unites marble, gold and fine stones. The reliefs are gilt; gilt are the narrow capitals of the pillars. The familiar outline of the arcature shaped like the neck of a Greek vase, enriched by an original floral fantasy, frames with gold the dahlias, the tulips, the foxgloves and the columbines which, with an almost heraldic pomp, unfold their sardonyx calyces and their malachite leaves. Nothing equals the charm of the old gold against the marble. It evokes the mystic embraces of the rays and meteors, the magic of the sunset on the snow, the most heavenly feasts of light and ether.

Then, in spite of the hideous whitewash, the crudity of the modern gilding, the paltry sheds that peep out between the intervals of the pillars or the trees, one regains the illusion of one of those places where the dream of crowned ambition, the will of the despot, the enjoyment of life amid the most intoxicating good fortune of permitted realization are exalted in the most passionate degree. And it needs no effort to attain the state of soul manifested by the famous Persian inscription on this unequalled monument:

> If on earth be an Eden of bliss,
> It is this, it is this, none but this!

4

To the right of the Diwan-i-Khas is the harem; to the left the baths. From the one to the other, through the private apartments of the emperor and

the begums, a channel of running water carries in a straight line, parallel with the rampart, its pledge of rippling coolness, without which no eastern luxury would deem itself complete. Shallow, easy to cross barefooted, it flows uncovered, except beneath the Diwan-i-Khas, where it is hidden by flags through which it raised its murmur, as of a distant source, to the sovereign's throne. The bright, moving water makes a delicious complement to the transparency and the polish of the marble. Like snow, the marble is kneaded of innumerous crystals; like the marble that slips, the water flees, vies with it in diaphaneity and purity, doubles the image and the beguilement of its cup with a reflection that is a caress. The water mirrors carved ceilings, lustrous walls, alabaster gratings with touches of gold, meanders through the gardens under live flowers, spreads into sheets of silver before niches adorned with lamps and imagines a new enchantment on leaving the cool, jealous darkness: the enchantment of light. Here, around the bath of the begums, it knots a channel in which the waving incrustations copy the poise of the grasses, the flight of the fishes; there, in the middle of the same apartment, it bubbles in a bason which it seems to have carved for itself, so greatly does the marble here seem wrinkled like sand in the shells of a beach at ebb-tide, in a net-work of pale jasper, unless indeed the marble hollows itself out, like the abandoned mould of some fossil lotus. Further, the mobile element was given reservoirs of jade, whose kerbs were decorated with

auspicious stones: rubies, diamonds, carbuncles and those old-fashioned turquoises of which the mine is lost. Water, jade, living flesh: a triple fairydom of voluptuousness!

Then, like Narcissuses exalted by the contemplation of their own beauty, the marbles yearn and speak. You may read this on the wall of the Khwabgah, which forms a counterpart to the Hammam, on the other side of the Diwan-i-Khas:

"Let us celebrate this garden of Haiyut Baksh, which is in the palace like a lamp in an assembly, and this clear canal, whose limpid water is as a mirror for every creature that sees and, for the sage, unveils the mystic world, and these cascades, each of which, one might say, is the whiteness of the morning or else a tablet stolen from the secrets of fate."

Thus water, already a witch, becomes an initiatrix; it lends its soul to those magnificences which, without it, one might consider barbarous; it sheds over this scene of too-facile sensuousness a little of that haughty anxiety, of that voluptuous sadness in which the primitive lust after power or pleasure is dignified by an infinite aspiration.

5

The Moti Musjid, or Pearl Mosque, still within the precincts of Agra Fort, remains not only perhaps the most perfect architectural work that the Moguls have left us, but a dazzling proof of their ability,

essential in all finished art, to show beauty by the mere eloquence of pure line and matter. The dignity, the sovereign chastity of these bare marbles spoilt by no misplaced ornamentation make of this ethereal temple a court of prayer elect above all those on earth.

There is something more intense in the mystic impression of those denticulated arches, those white and bluey perspectives than in the flight of the Gothic perpendiculars. The sense of the divine given by the gigantic Tamil pagodas, the largest in the world, seems confused, extravagant, muddy beside the fervour that shines forth from this act of faith and grace hewn in the most perfect substance wrought by the central fires. The serenity of the Greek temple has not that passion petrified in beauty. The one welcomes the divinity born of the play of the elements, the child of the clouds, the waves and the winds, blossoming from the original myth with no more pains than the flower from the bud; the other, to which the divinity is the inconceivable, calls to it, evokes it in a poem of fervent stone. It is the same difference as between joy and rapture. Yet let it not be imagined that there is anything strained or sorrowful in the sensation given by the Pearl Mosque. The first emotion is rather one of peace and serenity. It is only later that one begins to feel the ardour which the purified meditation of the believer would there be capable of attaining. Then, a vibration as of metal at white heat sends its waves coursing over those marbles. Next, all is peace

once more: the sanctuary is alive, a mysterious soul throbs there between bliss and ecstasy. . . .

6

The mausoleum raised by Shah Jehan to the Empress Mumtaz-i-Mahal (the Pride of the Palace) is certainly the best known and most glorified building in India. That tomb of white marble, which carries to the same height as our Panthéon its aerial dome above the waters that mirror it and rises, like an apparition, from the dark foliage of a garden-court, unites the most stirring associations of glory, beauty, love and death. Artists, irritated at hearing it compared with the Parthenon, have accused it of finikin affectation, of official coldness. Poets, on the other hand, have raved with admiration. It seems to defy the judgment of men and to disconcert comparison, criticism and praise alike. One day, the Taj will have ceased to supply globe-trotters with opportunities for fine writing; but will it ever be classed, ranked in the calm, somewhat dull Olympus of the master-pieces? I cannot say. The reader will find plentiful descriptions of it elsewhere. But something in its beauty, the chaste and fond spirit of its genius remains inimitable. Phrases, colours, outlines: everything betrays it. Between dryasdusticism and lyricism, emotion escapes. Let us then leave the man of action to beg these beautiful marbles to cool his brow, his fever; the æsthete to dream here of the marvellous adolescence of some

Messiah of beauty, the Ion of these barbaric precincts; the artist, amid the inner penumbra of the double pierced screens of marble tempering the light down to the tombs, to spell out the poetry of the epitaphs, while the heights of the dome fill with music, the eternal inquietude of never-resting echoes.

And let us simply, with the worthy author of Murray's Handbook, recommend frequent visits to the Taj and its gardens, especially at dawn, by moonlight and at the wane of day. It is perhaps at this last time that the Taj finds its fullest expression. From the top of the right-hand mosque (the garden-enclosure is flanked by two mosques), the view embraces a noble landscape. Between the garden and the river, the mass of immaculate marble assumes tones of honey and amber, the outlines of the dome and of the cypresses luxuriate in the twilit sky, as though in the conscious delight of their mystery and their harmony. Towering over the purple mass of the fort on the horizon are the three domes of the Moti Musjid and two palm-trees leaning towards each other. The river is rose and blue.

In Shah Jehan's design, a monumental bridge was intended to span it at this spot, uniting the Taj with another mausoleum of like splendour, where the emperor would have lain himself. But, instead of this fair dream, we see only a flat shore, where big tortoises are half stranded, pebbles over which a plover trips its way. And nothing joins the two

banks of the river, except at times a flight of green parrakeets, skimming over the surface of the water, emerald arrows stolen from the golden quiver of the twilight, a message from desire to death over the water softly flowing.

CHAPTER X

ENGLISH INDIA—HILL STATIONS—SIMLA

I

The Indian summer has nothing of the blest season of fruits and harvests, casinos and watering-places which we call by that name. Since the time of the Vedas, men here have been wished "a hundred winters" as we might speak of summers or springs. The fact is that, in India, the summer is hell, gehenna. We are unable to picture to ourselves those unparalleled torments. The Europeans who are condemned to remain in the plains appear at the end of autumn haggard, emaciated, almost unrecognizable. Sometimes, even often, they do not reappear at all.

During two hours out of the twenty-four, the two hours immediately preceding sunrise, you have a sensation of living and this respite is given you so that you may realize your position and its charms. The rest of the day is made up of torpor, extreme depression, semi-insomnia continuing that of the night; at five o'clock in the morning, a ride on horseback; at seven o'clock, the house is barricaded against the all-devouring enemy, the sun: doors and

windows are closed, are hung with tatties which are periodically wetted. The thermantidote begins to send out its current of cool air, the punkahs to swing in their silent and illusive see-saw. Outside, the scorching wind gets up and blows its furnace breath. A certain number of officials have to continue their ordinary duties: these are the most to be pitied. For the others annihilation begins. Stretched at full length, with the valance of the punkah at an inch from their face, they lie motionless. Gradually, visions pass before their eyes: a lane in Devonshire, with a strip of blue sea at the end of it; a Scotch glen in early morning: heather in which the dew-drops weave little cobwebs between the purple flowers, cool mists rising from the lake in the valley; the garden of an old priory in Kent: ivy creeping over the stone cross-bars of the front, borders full of old-fashioned flowers, the sun-dial near the box hedge; a nook in the New Forest: oaks, underwood, a scudding roe-deer, springs rippling in the moss. . . . Suddenly comes a cry outside, three notes repeated each time louder than the last, insistent, distinct, maddening: it is the brain-fever-bird, so-called because in its cry you hear, "Brain-fever! *Brain-fever!* BRAIN-FEVER!" . . . With every nerve on end, the man listens; he feels a sudden longing to dash his head against the wall: were he not so hot, he would do so at once; his pillow is already moist with sweat and his skin irritated with incessant perspiration; he feels the prickly heat tattooing his face with the story of his

life's irony and his useless effort, the "no luck" of the convict who will never escape again.

At six o'clock in the evening, you drag yourself to the club. In towns of some importance, the military band plays: comic-opera tunes, tol-de-rol ditties, woolly waltzes; the men drink endless whisky-pegs, so-called because each glass that you take is supposed to add a peg to your coffin. They are not in a good humour. The women, in the room reserved for them, turn over the pages of the fashion-papers published in London a month ago, while systematically shattering the reputations of their luckier sisters who have gone to the hills.

In the lost little stations in the Centre and South, it often happens that only one or two women remain, whose husbands have not the means to send them to the mountains. They stay behind with no other consolation than to watch themselves grow daily older and uglier—very few beauties are able to resist the hot weather—while their husbands are incensed at the promotion that fails to come and the children become etiolated, with their faded pink cheeks, their dulled fair hair, their silent lips on which the ayah secretly lays a mysterious pill that gives sweet dreams and a deep sleep, a grain of opium provided by the syce whom she loves and whom she will join presently, with no fear of an unexpected awakening.

One cannot but feel admiration for these beings who pay for their country's greatness by the sacrifice of themselves. Such is the ransom of power, the

reverse of a glorious empire. And they cling to this greatness—for they have business notions—in proportion to the price which they have paid for it. The sceptics may say that so great an endurance presupposes too much energy not to be exercised to the detriment of sensibility and that the feelings of these people must belong to a primitive order. Effort, they say, makes the hand and the heart alike callous. But we shall never correct the sceptics; and here as elsewhere one comes across wonderful instances of devotion.

2

Let us rather follow the flight of the delighted mem-sahibs towards the hills, even as the earthworm follows the butterfly's course through space. They are dreaming of balls, of gymkhanas, of excessive and victorious flirtations. They come from every part of the peninsula, from far-away residencies, from crusty garrison-towns, from stifling cities. They have an overplus of activity to get rid of, arrears of innocent (oh, so innocent!) trifling to make up, a love of life to satisfy. Here they come: young girls under the vigilant protection of their mothers or chaperons; old girls who protect themselves without assistance, but without conviction; irreproachable wives guarded by assorted husbands; and, above all, the sacred battalion of grass-widows!

The grass-widow is one of the institutions of modern India. She is the lady whose husband stays behind, toiling on in the plains, while swift

trains or tongas carry his mate towards the region of the opportune clouds. She is the angel of that mountain paradise. She sometimes descends from it.

Do you ask me if Anglo-Indian society is immoral? In any case, it does not like to be told so. It has never forgiven Kipling for his satires, full of sympathy and humanity though they might be. In all this, it has shown a certain stupidity, like any "society" worthy of the name. When aggravated with cant, as in this case, the stupidity becomes worse. The writer says to the world:

"Here are men and women, no more, no less, whom you do not know. Their joys, their struggles, their sorrows, the pathos of their life of battle and exile: all these I have endeavoured to depict so that they may be felt and lived by others who would love them. I have given life to this motley crowd; behind its apparent vulgarities I have shown the passion, the force that were not yet aware of themselves; I have smiled at its deformities, but I have dignified them by telling the cause of them; I have forgiven its weaknesses while describing them, for you will have understood that, at heart, I felt a few joys, even those of love, to be the due of those devoted victims my brothers."

And the society thus depicted, or at least its austere minority, for most of them are good people who make no pretence, replies:

"No, we are virtuous, we are pure, we are ever so pure. We do not know the taste of fermented liquor. Our wives never go off with a *tertium quid*.

Our sisters are citadels from whose ramparts waves the banner of propriety. We delight in seeing our families increase. We are in no single respect behind England, or even Scotland. Shame upon the ungrateful person who turns against the breast that nursed him!"

When all is said, then, is Anglo-Indian society immoral? Well, speaking in the sincerity of his heart, the traveller answers, No, it is not. I do not wish to discourage anybody, but, in a word, it is not. In any case, it is no worse than any other, but every one knows every one else and everything is known. And so we have feeble rumours with loud echoes and scandals stifled neither in ignorance nor in indifference. But it is not true that a certain subaltern, after a season spent in the company of a smuggled sister, will reappear at the other end of the country with the sister in question promoted to the rank of his lawful spouse; it is not true that certain wives of officials have been heard, at the Simla charity-bazaars, to indulge in such unseemly questions as, "Who was it that used to keep you last year, dear?" it is not true that you sometimes hear of the sudden elopement of Mrs. X. with Captain Z., nor that Venice and Monte Carlo conceal idylls born under the deodars of the Himalayas; it is not true that, at the dances, they arrange cosy retreats, known by the Hindustani name of *kala-jagas* and containing only two chairs and a lamp, sometimes with a limited supply of oil. In any case, it is a calumny as far as the two chairs

are concerned; I know, because I have been there: there is only one.

Putting easy irony on one side, I believe that English or Anglo-Indian society may be regarded as superior, from the point of view of morals, to our own. It is taken for the greater part (although the best families send their younger sons into the cavalry and the civil service) from the English middle-classes, which in no way profess the amiable unconstraint of the aristocracy or the easy morals of the lower orders. Those exiles, those pioneers, those expert handlers of men spring from provincial, religious, respectable England, with its narrow ideas and its unshaken principles, a dull class, with no sense of art, but solid, conscientious and containing the indisputable living strength of the race. One thing strikes the Latin from the first: the men are content, if necessary, to lead chaste lives and this without causing surprise. An Italian begins to talk women to you within five minutes of meeting you; a Frenchman betrays, if only by hints, his constant preoccupation with matters of love; an Englishman is ashamed of it or indifferent to it. The word hypocrisy rises easily to the lips. But, in truth, this nation is, perhaps, the least sensual of all and this is the only excuse for its virtue. It is too busy. Its ideals lie elsewhere. In one of its novels, the lover, at the sea-side with the woman he loves (they have returned on a pilgrimage to the spot where their first childish avowals were spoken), interrupts his

conversation, forgets the woman by his side, because he has seen passing through the haze a steamer sailing for the eastern seas. He is carried away by the greater instinct, the desire for space and adventure; he pensively murmurs to himself:

"Lucky old tub! . . . She'll lift the Southern Cross in a week . . . Oh, lucky old tub!"

3

The chief of the hill-stations is Simla. It is the summer capital for which the viceroy, the Court functionaries, the government officials leave Calcutta at the end of winter and it is the centre of the fashionable world of India. Imagine a Trouville containing a Court, a Baden-Baden of officials, of officers on leave, of temporary widows, with etiquette, with social competition, with an unbridled need of distraction, the whole lightly tinged with essential snobbery, hierarchical or aristocratic snobbery, both so natural.

Here, Viceregal Lodge represents the centre of activity. Garden-parties, balls and receptions alternate, with the majesty of celestial phenomena, around the serene and imperturbable person of "the Great Ornamental," the name conferred upon the viceroy by an Anglo-Indian satirist whose work, *Three Weeks in India*, shows no respect for the most sacred things. In spite of this defect, the little book most accurately describes that very special form of society, a little anomalous and yet homogeneous,

at once bristling with officialism and easy-going, indulgent, severe and, when all is said, the most sympathetic and the easiest of access that exists.

It loves pleasure. It does not taste it with the tip of its lips, in *blasé* fashion, but rushes upon it, swallows it greedily, in great mouthfuls, with a fine frenzy. The Simla season, like the London season, terrifies you with the number of its amusements. Breakfasts, tiffins, teas, dinners, cards to leave on people whom you have never seen and whose houses you can never find, rides, tennis, badminton, official dances, private dances, theatres, suppers, more dances, a feverish activity that brings chaperons to the grave. Look at Miss W—— passing—she is "Dick" to her friends: you know, one of the W—— girls, the twins, the daughter of the jolly colonel of the 22nd D.G.s — hurrying with the end of her parasol the runners dragging her absurd little rickshaw. She hasn't a minute to spare, she's on her way to rehearse in *The Yeoman of the Guard:*

"Oh, Captain So-and-so!"

It's So-and-so, that fetching officer of the R.B., "such a smart regiment, dear:" it makes as much fuss in the world as our own *chasseurs à pied.* Without troubling to salute, he says:

"You'll kill those *jhampanis.* Have you a dance left at the Z.s'?"

"Yes, think so, wait a bit"—she takes out a note-book, which she turns over feverishly—"only a barn-dance; I'm sure you hate it."

"We'll sit it out."

"All right, we'll sit it out."

"Supper ?"

"At the Pink Hussars."

"Hang the Pink Hussars !"

"Poor things ! Come, too."

"Not asked."

"I'll take you. They told me to bring a man, if I liked."

"All right. Good-bye." (To the jhampanis): "*Jeldi*,* pigs !" (To Miss W.): "Dig in !"

And Miss W—— trots away behind her team, her maidenly heart throbbing with perturbation at those ardent words. She has for three seasons at Simla aired the promises of an evident marriageableness and Captain So-and-so is first cousin to an earl. He, on his side, brings his polo-pony to a canter and says to himself:

"That Dick's a damned good sort."

He will propose to her to-night, perhaps.

It all depends on the Pink Hussars' supper.

Meanwhile, the daughter of the dashing colonel of the D.G.s goes and gets fined by the terrible Major —— (do not let us give him away), who this year manages the theatricals of the first amateur dramatic society of Hindustan (a regular theatre, with splendid scenery and dresses, calculated to make our boulevard theatres blush, if they had not forgotten how). Miss W—— does a skirt-dance. Why ? Because she performs this skirt-dance in a

* Quick !

noteworthy manner, that is all. I cannot remember exactly where it was to be introduced, but the major succeeded in fitting it in somehow.

And so the major fits the skirt-dance in and mops his face and the rickshaw tears off. Eight more calls; two teas, sweets at Peliti's for to-morrow's dinner, sign the visiting-book at Viceregal Lodge for the whole family, a curb-chain for Queenie, three rupees' worth of flowers and the comic song which that fetching Captain So-and-so always sings and which he is sure to forget to-morrow night (it has a terrible accompaniment with two flats)!

CHAPTER XI

ON THE SLOPES OF THE HIMALAYAS—GULMARG

Our hill-station is a calmer one. One might describe it as a cheap little hole, only it happens to be 10,000 feet above the level of the sea. Life has not the same intensity as at Simla; there is no question of palace-riots among the A.D.C.s, those rebels with their sudden attacks of influenza when they are called upon to get into uniform to trot round the charming Americans of Her Excellency's family; I have seen none of those fatal women (sometimes rudely described by the generic name of Simla harpies), with their troops of tumultuous admirers, who prevent the young engineers or boy subalterns from working for several generations.

The Engadine has no greener table-lands, no more majestic gorges than this spur of the Himalayas in which our hill-station nestles. But everything here is on a different scale from the Engadine. Three hundred square miles of country, the loveliest valley in Asia, lie stretched at our feet, enclosed in a wall of snow-capped mountains as tall as Mont Blanc, commanded by a peak of 20,000 feet, while a

more distant summit looks down upon them from the height of its inviolate snows at almost 26,000 feet in the sky.

We are surrounded by giant pines, which climb up the mountain slopes behind us until they reach the zone where the yellowing snows of the past winter are melting. It is the time of the monsoons: The south wind drives across the peninsula all the vapours hung by the equatorial summer over the Indian Ocean; on striking the barrier of the Himalayas, they burst into torrents of rain, deluges beyond our powers of conception: there are spots in Bengal where the annual rainfall attains the depth of a three-storeyed house. And panting India breathes again after the hell that is her summer.

Here, on the northern slope of the spur of the Himalayas on which we stand, we do not have to endure the first assault of the armies of Indra, the cloud-compeller. Nevertheless, the valley before us is sometimes only a lake of dark mists with eddying ripples that flow from wall to wall, riddled with continuous lightning-flashes amid the roll of distant thunders. Towards evening, they sometimes lift and the setting sun gilds their lower edges, while the valley appears quite green, marvellously clear and distinct, with each rice-plantation like a sheet of gold, the immense plain with its crops, its woods, its waters, the three lakes which the river joins together with a divine curve.

In a basin of verdure, among the deodars, the little wooden houses are scattered like toys from the

Black Forest. One obtains a curious impression of artificiality from this human encampment gallantly hooking its absurd huts on the eternal flanks of the mountain, where its members indulge in their little movements of activity and pleasure around the tiny steeple that groups and absolves them. The Mohammedan who watches them asks his God with a smile to damn them to all eternity; higher up, in the region where the bearded vultures circle in the sky, the Hindu rishi, lost in the meditations of the uncreated, has never caught sight of them from the threshold of his retreat.

Look at them, though, so little stirred by the irony of these things. The too-green grass, the bright dresses of the women, the light clothes of the men are like a "chromo," an animated chromo, full of movement. The wooden barn which they call the Club forms the centre. Beside it stands a group of horses and syces, in front of the tennis and badminton-nets. On either side of these, men and women, armed with rackets, jump about as though trying to catch a herring at the end of a string. Others play cricket. Mysterious groups wander about pieces of ground. They look as though they were hunting for mushrooms. No, they are playing golf. Over there, two horsemen are playing at racing. Two terriers also are playing at frightening a stray calf. Squadrons of polo-players charge with a clash, seem to hurl themselves upon a tragic fate.

Except for the terriers, there is something harsh, something strained in this general atmosphere of re-

creation. These people are not amusing themselves, but taking exercise. An Englishman spends a part of his childhood, of his boyhood, of his manhood and even of his old age in running after balls, on foot or on horseback. He will always do so, with the same seriousness and the same conscientiousness as though the fate of the empire depended upon it. At bottom, he is right: the fate of the empire does depend on it; but I imagine that the young Greeks in the stadium, who had every reason to think the same on the subject of their country, applied themselves to athletics with a less gloomy energy.

The struggle for life shows less shame in these men whose chief pleasures are those of the will. They will climb a mountain to pick a flower at the summit and perhaps forget to smell the flower. They will have lived strenuously, yet only half lived. They will have missed life's sweetness; those who live to enjoy will have missed hardly more: machines of the will or machines of sensation grind out much the same total of happiness and usefulness.

But how keen is that instinct for struggling, for competition, in the English! It is the old, old instinct, which demands that, even in one's recreations, the essential pleasure shall consist in "beating" another. We find it, for that matter, the same in the scrimmages at foot-ball or polo as in our own favourite outdoor game, dominoes. But here it invades everything. That young couple who have just been dancing leave the room puffing, perspiring, glowing with happiness. They look as though they

had been splitting wood. They have danced *longer* than all the others! Even in conversation, we find the same spirit of emulation; and also in wit. The latter has as its basis the anecdote, the story; it is a question of telling the best one; I have sat through terrible dinners. . . . But the Americans are worse.

In the open tent from which we watch the players, the men drink, write out slips, talk of racing challenges, glands and spavins. Over there, Polly, that charming girl whom nobody knows except by her Christian name, is having a gallop between two admirers. She is a decided young person. They say that she is just engaged for the third time. Those "subs" are not hard to please (one of them tells me that it is three years since he met a white woman to speak to) and the mess dinners are a potent aid towards the crystallization of an ideal. And in this way marriages are arranged which turn out well, pretty often.

A dandy passes, a sort of hammock in which a languid beauty is carried by four bearers and which calls up vague reminiscences of a town ambulance; next come two ladies followed by a slave to carry their rackets and walking to their diversions of pleasure or love with 30-inch strides. In the verandah of the Club, the clergyman, a special type, whom I recognize by his neat little snuff-coloured suit, asks a girl to keep a dance for him, while from within comes the manly voice of a lady in glasses, with an intimidating air, who is shouting to the

Hindu pundit of the library, the timid guardian of Marie Corelli and Rider Haggard, to have a *chit** conveyed to John Thomas Sahib, who is wanted for golf.

Down below, on the brink of the stream, among the red cows, the Mohammedan says his prayers, turning towards the sun dying over the mountain-tops, and strikes the grass with his forehead; higher up, in the region where the bearded vultures circle in the sky, the ascetic is lost to movement in the fascination of an inner star; and Polly, smacking her boot with her riding-whip, trots home, whistling:

When the little pigs begin to fly . . .

* A note.

CHAPTER XII

A POET OF INDIA

If you grant that a poet may be defined as the consciousness of his race, you will admit that this formula fits Rudyard Kipling closely. No doubt, there are others at once more exact and more comprehensive; let us reject none of them. But there are men who deserve to have definitions invented for them.

Has England ever had a national poet, an inspired singer who discovered the rhythm of the whole English life, who unravelled its general harmony and raised it to the dignity of beauty? I think not. If we except a phenomenon in the general order of things like Shakspeare, singers of the soil like Burns or Wordsworth, a bard laden with honour and glory like Tennyson, we may say that, in England, the poet has played the part rather of an outlaw. Without mentioning Marlowe, look at Byron, cursing his country which exiled him; Shelley, expelled from Oxford for atheism, wandering from sea to sea across Italy; Coleridge, who grew old, suspected after the eccentricities of his

youth, seeking refuge in the fumes of opium. Once dead, their country recognized them and took them back to her breast : comes the turn of Westminster Abbey, birthday-books, marble monuments, every manner of expiation ; but, upon the upshot, one is tempted to believe that she prefers her artists posthumous and sometimes kills them for the pleasure of stuffing them.

But this one, surely, she never can slight ? She endeavours to do so, notwithstanding, from habit. You will be told that Kipling is vulgar, that he is not art ; he, himself, in a piece in one of his volumes of verse, replies, with his quiet irony, to the objection, *Is it Art?* Also, it is quite natural that cant should take alarm, for none was ever less of a hypocrite than this free genius. And yet how respectful he remains towards this cant, from the point of view of morals, which is more important in this country than that of principles, and what were one not entitled to expect from this prodigious gift of life, if it could have been exercised in a less limited sphere of passion, with the boldness and the frankness of a Maupassant, for instance !

Nevertheless, his already immense popularity is bound to last. There are important reasons for this, reasons that do not lie outside this nation or this present stage of its development. Speaking more clearly, one might say that the artist is distinctly placed in his race and his period. A singular piece of good fortune, thanks to which there is no waste in the emotion which he communicates, for he comes

into immediate contact with the public, and no exhausting novitiate with the elect! I do not doubt but that this conception of glory will appear inelegant, tainted with Yankeeism to the purists, to those who look upon the Calvary of the precursors or the Tower of Ivory of the solitaries as the only possible platform from which to address posterity. And yet I think that we must accept it. Under examination, it may seem fine and logical.

What Rudyard Kipling has felt is the indefatigable and admirable effort of the Anglo-Saxon race and all the poetry that lies therein. In his work we hear the sound of "the seven seas" of the planet under the daring keel of the ships of England, of the gold on the merchant's counter, of the shrill fifes and the Afghan bullets, of the banjo of the settler who, beside the dying embers, sings songs of exile "to the naked stars."

But his patriotism implies neither the narrowness nor the want of understanding which are its purest forms with us. Let no mistake be made: according to men's temperaments, there is one mother-land that reigns above all others. For a Renan, it would be Truth; for a Kipling, it is Action. This love of energy is the very axis of his mind. I find a proof of this in a piece in his first volume, *Departmental Ditties*, in which he lays down this dogma of the brotherhood of the brave. In this way he would be led to that almost fatal termination of all higher contemporary thought which is hero-worship.

But he is no dreamer.

Nothing is simpler than his conception of life, than his excuse for man's duration. The universe is a conflict of activities, with the will of man at the top. All the poetry and all the joy of life are in man's struggle to preserve this dominion either by bold risks or patient toil. All nature bends to do homage to him who is her conscience and her master. The very wreck, half foundered, says:

> Man made me and my will
> Is to my makers still,
> Whom now the currents con, the rollers steer—
> Lifting forlorn to spy
> Trailed smoke along the sky,
> Falling afraid lest any keel come near!

Who would not, in such circumstances, have expected to come upon variations on the inanity of human effort?

Therefore, man carries the eternal youth of his struggle through the eternal youth of the world, stands amazed at its sights, subdues its elements. Paradise, says Kipling, in so many words, will be the star where men will work, without weariness, for the sole pleasure and the sole reward of working.

It is very natural that a philosophy of this kind should hold scruples cheaply. Courage and perseverance become the cardinal virtues. This may lead us far. Upon the whole, we should end by finding, if we pushed this argument to its extreme results, that strenuous action forgives all motives; and, if we dared to question Mr. Kipling as to what is at the back of his thought, I believe that he would answer:

"Yes, I consider that the æsthetic enjoyment resulting from the performance or the spectacle of an heroic deed is such as to permit us entirely to disregard its ethical significance."

I doubt whether his style will be recognized in this reply; but his thought is there. Laclos wrote:

"That is so like men! All equally rascally in their designs, the weakness which they display in the execution they christen probity."

But that is French cynicism. Listen to a German kinsman:

"Man is a being who wishes to go beyond himself."

This phrase belongs to a man who, by dint of going to the end of his mind, went out of it: Friedrich Nietzsche. There really exists a rhythm of thought and I leave the reader to verify these concords. Kipling, without tracking the idea as far as Nietzsche, stopped at art; but he followed the same road.

He has not passed its tragic stage, where Zarathustra relieved himself, in his ascent towards the light, of the burden of pity. However unchristian in his tendencies, he is still made up of Christianity and he is wrapped to his very heart in the evangelical shroud. He is capable of manly pity as well as courageous pessimism. In the fight, he lingers over the victims. His tenderness goes out to the obscure, if not to the humble, to the outlaws, to the unresigned. And, by one of those contradictions which, when all is said, are the salt of a human mind, he professes a respect for the Law in many a

passage of his books. One would say a sort of social morality (so stubbornly is the moralizing and preaching element implanted in an Englishman), tempered with tolerance and even with inclinations for individuals.

Rudyard Kipling's works have been well received in France. He is so different from us: how could we avoid liking him? We are still allowed to possess a certain acuteness of critical perception, a gift of comprehension (I was reading its praises in an English review, in connection with M. de La Sizeronne's work on Ruskin) which our enemies might compare among themselves with that lucidity of vision which is traditionally ascribed to the dying. Any form of originality makes a claim upon us. Place that equation of happiness in juxtaposition, by way of contrast, with that of an Anatole France, for instance. I take this name as summing up the tendencies, the acquirements and the grace of the French intelligence of our day. It is more than a name: it expresses the whole movement initiated by Renan. And no soil but ours could produce that quality of genius. To its eyes, ideas carry weight only through what they destroy; it is absolutely negative. Kipling, on his side, is absolutely positive. We thus enjoy the dangerous pleasure of being able to appreciate such diverse forms of intellect and art, reflecting that the signs of *plus* and *minus*, in algebra, lose all meaning before the sign of infinity . . .

What I have not mentioned, in the impossibility of defining its strength, is the accent, the poignancy,

the impassioned soberness of Rudyard Kipling's style. It has a certain directness, a familiarity that remains dignified, the manliest vigour. That personal modesty, that absence of sentimental show, the profound vibration of a sympathy and of an imagination served by means of a startling simplicity: all this goes to make up an art which one loves with something more than one's critical sense and which, beyond the regions of literary emotion, reaches, one would say, the deep layers of sensibility, the sacred domain of the unconscious which analysis has never been able to profane, to which philosophy, after so many vain flights, humbly returns in order to grope for the solutions so ardently desired.

CHAPTER XIII

PRINCES

I

THE Maharajah of B—— is twenty-five years old. He was no sooner seated on his throne, in the old city that reflects its mud ramparts in the green moat where crocodiles swim lazily to and fro, than he determined to live, to profit by his newly-acquired notions of British culture. That is why he set himself to quaff great goblets of a mixture of whisky, champagne and benedictine. This gave something amusingly limp to his administration.

The resident complained. The viceroy was roused. So much so that the young prince was deposed for a time and the government of his States transferred to the durbar, or privy council, only casually inspired by the most affable of political agents. One more failure to be laid to the score of European education.

2

Few things can be more curious than to examine the different effects which English ideas and influence

produce upon the minds of these eastern potentates. The effects are infinitely varied and sometimes perturbing. The Indian princes may be divided into two groups: the conservatives, hostile to western ideas, steeped in the old principles, and the moderns, better trained, knowing the price of the favours of the suzerain race and presenting every shade of moral degradation, while enjoying no real advantage beyond that of being quite as much suspected by their master as the rajahs of the old school and more despised. The English have not forgotten that the Nana Sahib, the terrible butcher of the Mutiny, was the most civilized of the princes, speaking their language, entertaining them in the European fashion with all the refinement of western urbanity. The same women's fingers whose rings he had admired or whose fan picked up on some evening of an official entertainment at the Residency in Lucknow may have written, steeped in their blood, those words of despair and farewell which the rescuers, arriving too late, found inscribed on the walls of the prison at Cawnpore, or have been chopped off, in the presence of the Nana himself, on the kerb of the tragic well where they struggled, amid what entreaties! . . . All the East lies revealed in these contrasts.

There are some contrasts as pronounced among the products of English education, or rather its attempts, for the groping stage is not yet past. The less intelligent have been struck by the thrilling and respectful tones in which the English say of a man that he is "a good sportsman." That ideal appears

to them both enviable and accessible. Whether this be due to sincerity or the desire to please matters not: they have their polo-teams, their cricket elevens, their triumphant sports of all kinds. The Maharajah of —— is unrivalled at pig-sticking. He has given further pledges to western influence: he has married his trainer's daughter. In the society of the English officers who do not object to drinking his champagne, he has adopted the supreme smartness of talking military slang. He expresses himself in the language of a "sub" fresh from Sandhurst and calls you "old chap." Delicious phrases have been attributed to him, including the following on the subject of the insubordination of the Hindu peoples:

"We ought to have a new mutiny to put down. Those niggers"—mark you, his own fellow countrymen!—"want another lesson."

The elegance and dignity of this remark make it lapidary, worthy of being inscribed on the frontal of the temple of the new Law. Let us be just, however: old-fashioned monarchs will tell you that —— is not "born," that he comes of the juggler caste and that he occupies a throne only by the whim of fate and the will of England. We must believe it. We must believe everything in this land where everything happens.

3

The Maharajah of M—— had as his tutor an old English colonel, not old enough. They travelled in Europe together. The Maharajah brought back a wonderful collection of photographs with him. Since that time, he suffers life in his States anything but gladly. Modest England opposes the importation of white women. The Maharajah is an unhappy man. When he exhibits his collection, he reminds his visitor of a schoolboy taking Mlle. de Mérode's photograph from his desk to show you. For the rest, he retains a charming barbaric ingenuousness.

4

The ruler of C—— is more interesting to the psychologist and the inquirer. He believes in the transmigration of souls and corresponds with Marie Corelli, the too-well-known authoress. Small and mean-looking, he worships in himself the unresigned soul of a hero of Greek antiquity. At night, on the margin of the lake where stand the colossal ruins of the cities built by his ancestors, he dreams vague and fruitless dreams. It is over there, very far away, in the heart of Central India, in the Bundelkund country. Epic palaces and conquerors' tombs crumble on the mountains and on the banks of the mighty rivers which we cross on elephant-back. This strange king reminds one of a Louis of Bavaria,

a romantic prince of Hindu legend. But the likeness is not quite the same, even though the background to the picture have an even more mysterious and distant grandeur. A fatal absurdity hangs threateningly over all. Sometimes, on days when he feels bored, the maharajah dresses himself as a highlander or a ballet-girl. Then he sits on his throne and all his Court, by way of expressing its admiration, says:

"*Wah! Wah! Wah!*"

The ranees, always neglected, look at him in wonder, applaud him from behind the marble screen of the pavilion with the faded hangings. One is a daughter of the Rajah of O——, each of whose ancestors used annually to spend a third of his revenue on the festivals of the marriage of the salagrama stone with the tulsi plant. The elephants, in the court-yard, on the brick terraces, near the rusty cannon, heap little piles of forage on their heads, for they fear the strokes of the lingering sun. Through the open bay, the Maharajah sees the ruined palace and the tombs of his conquering ancestors, in the middle of the pool where the waterfowl rise before the recruiting-officer's duck-gun. The great fruit-eating vampires, which have hung all day in angry clusters from the trees on the bank, now fly away, one by one, noiselessly, and skim over the water of the lake strewn with little bulb-domed kiosks. Then where are you, O heroic Greece, and you, Miss Marie Corelli?

And, sadder, the Maharajah, full of unutterable

doubts, crosses a lean calf in its pale silk covering over a pointed knee. The muslin skirts puff out, the prince dreams, while ghosts of warriors and battles float amid the twilight and the sleepy "*Wah! Wah!*" of the ranees and the Court rises with the smoke and smells of the bazaar. . . .

5

Very different is the audience which His Highness of B—— is good enough to grant me. I arrive through the barbicans and posterns of a sinister-looking, tumble-down palace. Under the gateway, on the left, a beggar thrusts out his hand, while, on the right, the hastily-mustered guard oddly presents the bayonets which it has not had time to fix at the end of its rifle-barrels and a trumpeter produces a few hoarse sounds. The officer who presents me is the inspector of the troops of the imperial service and explains to me that he has nothing to do with the private guard of the Maharajah. The latter joins us, after a minute, in the hideously-furnished room, with its semi-European style; he is out of breath, he has been running, he is lost in excuses for keeping the English officer waiting, insists with a vapidness that leaves nothing to be wished for. I feel somewhat neglected in this distribution of apologies, but my influence is naturally less powerful than the captain's to have the *guddee*, or throne, restored to this unemployed prince. He has a rather attractive face and is dressed all in yellow,

for it is the feast of Vasant Panchami: a long tunic of flowered satin, a yellow muslin turban with little flowers, patent-leather pumps, a stick with a silver crutch. We exchange remarks in which the triteness of the West is multiplied by the impenetrability of the East until they attain an intensity of futility that is almost beautiful. This is the general tone of the relations permitted between the two races. The monarchs observe it in their palaces, the women in their alcoves. We must needs be resigned. It is the same in every rank of society. Our curiosity appears to them idle, indifferent and often ridiculous. We ourselves do not interest them. In a letter written by a holy man who was brought up in England, who graduated at Cambridge and who now lives quite naked in the Country of the Five Rivers and flees like a zebra across the Himalayas when a tourist asks to see him, I have read a sentence in which the orientalists of our civilization were described as "glow-worms that take their light only from the surrounding darkness. . . ." How pleasant!

The dancing-girls have been sent for. In spite of the profound boredom which the native dances provoke in every Englishman, the captain makes this sacrifice to my globe-trotting curiosity. A famous star is here from Agra, for the festival. She sings, first with monotonous gestures of the hands: expostulations, remonstrances. A sunbeam enters through the blinds and at times fastens on the ring which she wears on her thumb and which is

mounted with a little mirror. The musicians—three hurdy-gurdies, a drum, a set of bells—sit round her, prompt her in a very actress's-motherly manner. Then a bound forward and poses: she squats down, only a bent knee quivers of all her motionless person, quivers so as to shake the six rows of bells round her ankle, which sing with a rippling shudder.

She wears stockings, a civilized detail that shocks us, and, when we ask her for the famous Persian song, that *Taza be taza* which is a classic in the repertory of every *nauchni* of Hindustan, she limits herself to repeating indefinitely the first couplet and an impression of melancholy and of artificiality comes to us from those mechanical movements from which a soul has fled, the soul of the East, of a beautiful corpse that is still adored.

But the youngest of the troop had a strange voice like a very young boy's, wore an orange scarf over a black skirt worked with silver wire and I loved the fascination of her serious mouth while the child turned, turned, one finger on her temple, her bare toes, covered with rings, clutching at the flowers of the hideous carpet.

How many more times yet will the shifting scene of life, of civilizations, of cults change around frail and imperishable beauty!

CHAPTER XIV

KAPURTHALA

It is some years since Paris society first cast eyes upon the Maharajah of Kapurthala, at a great ball given by the Princesse de Sagan. He and the young Duchess of Aosta were the great attractions of the evening. I see him now, very tall, resplendent with gems under his light-coloured turban, talking to the lovely duchess with the Napoleonic profile. The Maharajah was paying his first visit to France, realizing his fondest dream, for this right loyal feudatory of the Emperor of India has for our country a feeling of the most touching and, at the same time, the most flattering affection. This love was born and took shape in the course of an uneventful youth and indeed sprang from vague data, the result of reading and oral recitals. It was the love of Geoffroy Rudel for the Princesse Lointaine, cherished on the strength of a portrait. In spite of gloomy forebodings—his grandfather, sailing for England, had died on the Red Sea—the Prince embarked on board ship as soon as he had attained his majority. His religion, which is that of the Sikhs, did not forbid him to cross the "Black

Water," as the Hindus call the sea. He would have, on his return, neither to pay the priests his weight in precious matter nor to sleep for a week, for his purification, inside a golden cow.

When he returned home from his tour through Europe and America, he remained faithful to his first love and no city that he visited left so powerful a memory on his mind as Paris. He quitted the picturesque old palace of white or yellow stucco, where his life as a melancholy heir-apparent had been spent, for a new residence built after his own designs and called the Palace of the Élysée. Beside it, a pavilion, where the little princes live with their French governess, assisted by two young Englishwomen, bears the name of Armenonville. Even so did captive Andromache console herself by giving to the torrents of Epirus the names of Scamander and Simois.

Since then, Kapurthala has become a centre of hospitality, at once sumptuous and cordial, for Frenchmen travelling in India. They there find their tongue spoken to perfection by the sovereign, studied by his Court, playing an essential part, by his order, in official education throughout the length and breadth of his States. They there find the cult of their civilization, their rarest wines, the portraits of their most irreproachable beauties. A palace decorated with talc reliefs, with silver reflections on a blue ground, is set aside as a guest-house for visitors (as among most of the Indian princes), and furnished with all the resources of European luxury; and there

is even a club (once a dissenting place of worship), which, with its books and newspapers, provides for the needs of the mind.

Another larger palace contains the Durbar Hall, employed for audiences and solemn deliberations, where the prince, with an unusual sense of modernity, has had a skating-rink installed. Here, at six o'clock on week-day evenings, His Highness invites his guests. The military band plays waltzes, the roller-skates hum under the echoing vaults, you are haunted by vague reminiscences of the Palais de Glace and you undergo a complicated series of impressions. Tennis alternates with rinking and is played beside the palace. The music is then moved to a neighbouring band-stand. The Maharajah is a crack tennis-player, as the frequenters of the Île de Puteaux will remember.

At other times he goes to "the Villa," a sort of Trianon which he has built at a few miles from his capital and which resembles the *maisons des champs* strewn on the hillsides of Sèvres or Ville d'Avray. There is then a procession of great solemn landaus along the new road which commands a view of the immense horizon of the Punjab, with its waving corn-fields as of an oriental Beauce.

Jagat Sing is a building prince. At Mussooree, his summer residence, he is constructing a huge country-seat, in the Renascence style, of which marvels are related. In the matter of taste, he surpasses all the other native princes, his fellow countrymen, whose States I have as yet visited

Seldom shall you find at Kapurthala the horrible things which, in the eyes of the progressive rajahs, represent the supreme refinements of western genius. Perhaps even, one day, he will light upon the noble attitude open to a monarch who, having steeped himself in modern culture and passed through civilization in the vainglorious and limited sense which we give to the word, should once more, of his own free will, become traditional and conservative. Not that, as it is, he has broken with all the old customs: far from it. Thus, the feast of the Holi, the Hindu carnival, was celebrated in this as in previous years, in the gardens of the old ancestral palace, and I was able to see returned to the Treasury the gold and silver squirts used by the Maharajah and his dignitaries to cover one another with water dyed red in the course of those saturnalia by whose primitively orgiastic character the first travellers to Hindustan were so immensely struck. Confetti-throwing is as yet unknown at Kapurthala.

And what marvels that Treasury contains! Their value must amount to millions of francs. Here are the jewels of the deceased ranees, anklets in Rajputana enamels whose brilliancy exceeds that of any enamel of Florence or Limoges, representing serpents, flowers, or full-face elephants' heads; rings of infinite variety, for the fingers and toes, some of them mounted with an enormous emerald the size of a five-franc piece, which is incrusted, in the centre of the huge green stone, with a diamond set in a narrow thread of gold; nose-ornaments and all manner

of gold and jewelled pins. Here are drinking-services in Persian filigree of gold and silver, goblets and ewers, in slender, fanciful shapes, adorned with verses of Hafiz in which the cup-bearer is exhorted to "fill high the bowl" and the poet to sing its intoxication; aigrettes for the turban with enamelled stalks ending in a scroll of rubies, which are laid on to the stuff; state umbrellas in cloth of gold, fringed with little pearls, which are carried over the prince seated on his elephant; immense trappings for those same elephants, covered with thick embroideries, and, for them too, collars of silver vine-leaves, tiger-claws mounted two and two, ear-rings shaped like cymbals.

The howdahs in which the Maharajah and his dignitaries sit on solemn occasions are huge platforms perched on the back of the elephants and fitted with cushions, bolsters and priceless carpets which offer their softness to backs wearied by the majestic rolling of the ponderous beasts. These howdahs are there in dozens, on the floor, like sleighs, their silver rectangular balustrades emptied of the costly stuffs which we shall be shown elsewhere: one has a golden balustrade at least yards four round by sixteen inches high. I see also gala housings and fly-flappers adorned with plates of gold and with enormous cabochons of emeralds cut to resemble pine-apples.

Among the sovereigns who visited the Exhibition of 1900, the Parisians were fortunate to see this friendly prince, whom it would be impossible to

suspect of any mental reservation or political calculation in his kindly grace, always so willingly and lavishly displayed. Let us hope for many more visitors, highnesses or majesties, who are like him.

CHAPTER XV

MORE MAHARAJAHS

I

Has this one come to the Durbar, this high-priest of Krishna, of Krishna who is Kaniya, who is Heri, who is Vyasi and so many more besides, this Goswami of Nathdwara, this Pontiff of the Rajasthan, at whose feet arrive offerings from as far as Samarkand, from the banks of the Volga, from the frozen plains of Siberia, and who proudly shows, in the official pictures, the Rana of Oodeypore, the premier prince of Hindustan, bowing low to receive his blessing? Will he risk his majesty among the pollutions of those profane crowds, he who, for fear of contamination, never touches the hand of a man fed on meat, on whose territory no living thing is ever killed? I remember the venerable episcopal calash which he sent to the boundary of his States and Oodeypore to convey me to Nathdwara, which, till then, no Frenchman had, I think, visited. It was waiting for me with its four horses under a banyan-tree, surrounded by a troop of almost naked Bhils (who are the still savage aborigines

of the country), leaning on bows as tall as themselves.

Rocked on the violet cushions, I saw the monotonous landscape fly past me, with its fields of red and white poppies which yield the opium, its sanctuaries where smirks an idol crowned with marigolds and daubed with vermilion, until I reached the palace where I was expected and where the guard, having no rifles, presented its bayonets, as at B——, to the foreign guest.

The customary presents arrived forthwith: exquisite fruits, all sorts of milk foods (Krishna, the lover of the heavenly milkmaids, is pre-eminently a pastoral god), sweetmeats scented with essence of roses and tuberoses. The dishes were set down on the ground of the apartments covered, walls, ceilings and floors, with immaculate muslin, where I lived for two days on bucolic fare (it would have been in bad taste to touch as much as an egg), listening through the diaphanous tissues that closed even the carved stone trellis-work to the passionate lowing and warbling of all the beasts and all the birds of this land where men do not kill.

Introduced into "the Presence," as they say there, I felt a certain disillusion at finding not a pontiff of the emaciated type (although there is nothing of the ascetic about the god Krishna), but a man of a sensual and prudent air, not without real ecclesiastical and sovereign dignity under his vestment of flowered mauve silk covered by a hood of precious stones fringed with emeralds as big as pears in midsummer. . . .

Has he too been seen at Delhi, this most pure high-priest of the Player of the Blue Flute, in the suite of George V. ?

2

The Maharajah of Jeypore, during his stay in London, has hired a large house in Kensington, furnished in the style of an Anglo-Indian bungalow: need I say more? He is by far the most important of the Indian princes who have come to England for the coronation; and, like the Doge of Venice in the presence of Louis the Great, he might well say:

"What astonishes me most is to see myself here."

The expenses of this journey, which is certainly the great event of the Maharajah's life, amount to £750,000, of which at least one half goes in presents to the King. The rest has secured the use of a steam-boat of 7000 tons for the double journey and the shipping of a retinue of one hundred and twenty-five persons supplied with food prepared according to rite and with water from the Ganges sufficient for three months' consumption. Enormous sums will be paid to the Brahmans on the prince's return to his States. As a Hindu who follows his faith strictly and scrupulously, he has escaped the pollution attached to the crossing of the Black Water only by a multiplication of the propitiatory and purificatory ceremonies. When he embarked at Bombay, sacrifices were offered to the sea: rice, fowls, cocoa-nuts, tuberoses and marigolds. When he returns to Jeypore, following the old ceremonial

of his ancestors, he will be weighed against his weight in gold, which will be distributed among the priests. And, for a supreme security, he has brought his god with him! The tutelary idol has accompanied the grandson of the sun, across the deep, to the fogs of the suzerain Thule. All this has necessitated an unprecedented complication of rites and ceremonies and delicate transhipments, where the essential thing has been to protect "the Presence" against profane looks and touches. And who do you think has undertaken to arrange these details? Mr. Cook in person! Circular tickets for divinities, special trains for Olympus constitute, I imagine, a record. After he had "conducted" William II. through the Holy Land, one would have thought that this colossal man's ambition was satiated; but no, he had taken an emperor to the cradle of his God: naught would content him but that he should take a god to the sickbed of his emperor! The age is far from commonplace.

As it is the afternoon, His Highness wears comparatively few diamonds in the hilt of his tulwar in its pink-velvet scabbard and from the row of pearls round his neck hang only three or four emeralds each barely the size of a plover's egg. The fifty years of his age bear lightly on his noble and warlike carriage. He belongs to the oldest aristocracy in the world, to that Rajput nobility which was one of humanity's most magnificent successes and which has preserved its immutable traditions and all the cult of chivalry through centuries of an unparalleled epic, beside

which the Homeric frescoes pale. What can compare with the legends of the three sieges of Chitor, the sacred city, the palladium of Hindustan, where waved the crimson standard of Mewar, while the warriors clad in yellow garments, which mean that they will return victorious or not at all, hurl themselves upon the camp of the Mogul hordes and, in the underground temples in which horror has never since ceased to dwell, thirteen thousand women and young girls die a voluntary death on the funeral-piles of sandalwood! One must have seen those wonderful ruins, now abandoned to the reptiles and the brambles, on their hill shaped like a ship's prow and crowned by "the ringlet of Chitor," the Tower of Victory of Rajah Kumbo, "more terrible than the flame in the dry jungle," as the inscription at the top bears witness.

I cannot refrain from quoting, for love of the picturesque, another episode related by the bard Chand, the story of the old chieftain who, drunk with love and opium, entered the chamber of one of the queen's waiting-maids and was betrayed by the woman jealous to avenge her honour. During his sleep, she tied him by means of his great turban, fifteen cubits long, to the charpoy, or pallet-bed, where he lay. The enemy break in, the old tiger wakes, struggles for a moment against his bonds and then, with a prodigious effort, stands erect, with the bed on his back like a turtle's shell, and, with the aid of a copper vessel, exterminates his discomfited enemies at his leisure.

I do not remember whether the Maharajah of

Jeypore numbers this hero among his ancestors. The episode would have suggested, in a curious manner, the emblem of the turtle which figures in the arms of the Kuchwachas, one of the thirty-two races descended from the sun, of which he is the heir of line.

A still more illustrious prince, however, has refused to cross the ocean. I refer to the Maharajah of Oodeypore, the real King of Kings, hailed as such by all India, from the Himalayas to Cape Kumarin, the scion of the only Rajput blood that has never accepted the ignominy of mingling with the detested seed of the sons of Timur, the most magnificent Padishahs of Delhi. He has remained in his enchanted palaces and the marble kiosks of the lakes that reflect the pink citadels perched on the waterside peaks. . . .

However, His Highness of Jeypore leaves us for the India Office, where he is expected by important understrappers. And, as this is mail-day, the babu secretary goes off to write, in flowery terms, to the eunuchs of the zenana to reassure the weeping queens, none of whom has accompanied the master and who are pensively casting their dice of jade with turquoise spots and counting the chances and the lucky numbers in their retreats in the great galleried wells, below the level of the sacred pond where the slow crocodiles swim, swooning with heat. . . .

CHAPTER XVI

TOURISTS, PORTRAITS AND MASQUES

I

His Royal Highness is a genial prince and a desperate sportsman, who has arrived in India to kill tigers, elephants, bears, the very rare ovis of the great plateaus and time. He has come from America, where he laid low the terrible grizzly bear in the Rocky Mountains and found himself the Meleager of a legion of Atalantas of oil or pork. For the rest, he is charming, with the slim figure of a young squire by Mantegna, not tall, but with supple muscles which one suspects to be capable of very quick and sudden efforts, and he is curious by reason of the contrast of his Latin nature in the midst of the slower Saxons, with their infrequent gestures and their massive limbs, even as a delicate Florentine rapier among tall two-handed swords. His greedy eye takes in every detail of the mem-sahibs decked out for the occasion and flashes at the sight of the fine curtseys made by maidens of a decided bearing, who are not used to it and who bob down comically and with an indignant air during the reception, while the good prince

smiles at them with his fine teeth and with his eyes where lingers a trace of the sensuousness of his happy country. As for them, in their hearts, they think "the little foreigner" good fun.

2

Here is an Englishman, exceedingly rich, not exactly a globe-trotter in the strongest sense of the word, but rather a sort of planetary saunterer, a cosmopolitan dilettante. His is a type almost unknown to our people, disturbing in view of our stay-at-home habits, nay more, immoral, even as the bird of passage strikes the farm-yard bird as immoral.

This one's special characteristic is that he travels about to satisfy not his ambition nor his will, but his love of fine sights. He is the gentleman whom we meet at Bayreuth, for the Wagner performances, at Milan, for Perosi, at Leeds, for Handel or Elgar; he was present at the opening of the Dutuit collection in Paris, on the eve of his departure for Bombay; and, though he missed *L'Étranger* at Brussels, he was at the dress-rehearsal of *Pelléas*. He knows the whole of the world; his picturesque house at Westminster, whose windows full of old Leeds ware, overlook St. James's Park, has seen all the elegance and all the talent of the two hemispheres pass through its doors. In England, where taste is a matter more of discipline than of initiative, he exercises a sort of æsthetic judicature and of con-

sulting Mæcenasship, not that he cares to do so, but because the suffrage of the elect invests him with it. He has come to the Durbar because it offers an unequalled occasion to see India and all the enchantments of the fabulous East collected in a rare apotheosis. He will bring back nicknacks, perhaps, if he finds any, a chaotic multitude of gorgeous memories and, for his suppers of the coming season, a few recipes of the sweet, hot curries as cooked in Madras by the half-castes of Goa the Sleepy.

3

The terrible American woman has left a track of affright in her wake. Baltistan, Dardistan and Kafiristan have witnessed her passage and remain pale and trembling. Her coolies, humble long-haired Baltis whom she used to pull by their feet from under their beds where they hid for fear of the passes so difficult to climb under the load of the fair explorer's baggage, still show the marks of the nailed shoes with which she stimulated their zeal at critical moments. Thus did she make her way, escorted by a tiny, smiling husband. The mighty glaciers of the Karakoram bent low before her; she crossed the Indus and the Shyok on bridges made of three strands of wattled willow-branches, or else on a raft of inflated goatskins, a mode of transport which I recommend to lovers of the picturesque. She christened mountains: the mountains are unprotected in this country. Henceforth, Mount Clara Bison

Hangman lifts its virgin, but astonished crest to the Himalayan sky.

And this name, which already renders illustrious a brand of canned meats or American "shoes" at Chicago, will remain mingled, for a time, with the stories of the explorers (all as jealous as old flirts) and with the legends told, for centuries to come, with lowered voices, by the timid Baltis round the fires at the halting-places. "Clara Bison Hangman" will become a formula of incantation, of witchcraft, employed to conjure up some terrible *raksha*, or demon, of the West. . . .

To give an idea of the way in which this type of foreign woman may strike the oriental imagination —and it is a question not only of the American travelling lady here named, but of all the energetic women over there who help their males to bear the White Man's Burden—I will quote an extract from a Sanskrit poem, as yet unpublished in our language, which gives a rather different conception of the Eternal Feminine:

"The Demiurge, after creating the world and man, saw that he had no solid element remaining. Thereupon he took the roundness of the moon, the curves of the creeping plant, the embrace of the vine-branch, the tremor of the grass, the slenderness of the reed, the brilliancy of the flower, the lightness of the leaves, the tapering thinness of the elephant's trunk, the shudder of the clustering bees, the gladness of the sunbeam, the tears of the clouds, the caprice of the winds, the timidity of the hare and the pride of the

peacock, the softness of the parrot's throat and the hardness of the diamond, the sweetness of honey and the cruelty of the tiger, the heat of the flame and the coldness of snow, the cackle of the jay, the mockery of the cuckoo, the hypocrisy of the crane and the faithfulness of the wild-duck and, mixing all these things together, made them into woman and gave her to man."

4

Baba means baby. August Hermann Baba was only eighteen months old when I knew him down there, down there, in the Tibet of the Red Lamas, on the plateaus of ice and fire whence the old Indus has to scramble down for more than ten thousand feet before mingling with the Indian Ocean.

August Hermann's father is a virtuous Protestant missionary, of the sect of the Moravian Brethren, married to a young German girl newly arrived from Bavaria, just like that, with her three dresses, her recipes for pastry and her mother's blessing, to lead a blameless life in the heart of Asia with her chosen spouse. It is an existence which has its little drawbacks, we must admit. For instance, persons who are not acclimatized to it are unable to endure the rarefaction of the atmosphere at great altitudes: fatal heart-disease declares itself almost invariably. In summer, the sun kills you; in winter, an arctic temperature, which cloisters the natives for months in a sort of villages that are half burrows, gives the whites all the illusion of a polar holiday. As for

communications, you are at fourteen days' march from the capital of Kashmir, whence a three days' carriage-drive is barely sufficient to take you to a railway-station. That fourteen days' march is done on pony-back, sleeping in unlikely lodgings, where often a hole in the roof does duty for a chimney. Moreover, in the great colds, the pass of the Zoji La is not to be crossed by everybody. Whole caravans are lost in the snow; running postmen are found in the spring squatting on their mail-bags, intact, frozen in their goatskin coats, preserved by the cold. Then, the picture-postcards from Halle or Tübingen are subject to unkind delays. . . .

If even the abundance of the spiritual harvest made up for the rigours of this apostleship! But it falls far short of it. A Russian missionary whom I met over there confessed to me, in a careless moment, that, in thirty-two years, he had effected one solitary conversion, that of an old woman *in articulo mortis.* He added that he was not quite sure that she was not dead first.

The Ladaki is impregnable from the religious point of view, not in the manner of the high-caste Hindu, who politely offers, if that will please the missionary, to adopt Christ as a supplementary incarnation of Vishnu, but from sheer inertia. His very Buddhism, truly considered, is only a varnish spread over a foundation of superstitions as old as man's intelligence, probably older. . . . And, to crown the humiliation, the Ladakis who change their religion all turn Mohammedans!

No matter, August Hermann cuts his teeth rocked by his Tibetan nurse, aged eight years and named Singhi, the lioness. She has an Eskimo appearance, a broad, cheerful face and, all day long, sings strange songs about the Devils of the Passes and young girls whose figures are like "the bells of the lamaseries." When she is a little bigger, she will don the hood embroidered with rough turquoises and take her three official husbands on the May pilgrimages. And, on the wild wormwood, under the shade of the apricot-trees, they will sit and quaff their chang, which is fermented barley-beer, or else tea boiled for three days with butter and soda, or perhaps the bewitched nectar of the distant lands of Thule, the whisky of the conqueror.

Poor little August Hermann, offspring of chaste nuptials, there is but too great a chance that, by that time, you will be sleeping in the small cemetery of Leh, in the bend of the infidel torrent which, a little higher, turns the praying-wheel in the orchard of the heathen monks. May the Lord Buddha, whom the vain and guilty machine invokes night and day, succour your little Protestant soul set free so far from its paradise!

5

It is mortally cold in the dark temple * where the lanterned dome hardly allows the light of an evening

* The lamasery of Hamis, where I saw this "devil-dance," has at its head a *Kushok* who comes from Lhasa and is

of exile to fall from the top of its four red pillars on things never seen. Outside, the willows are dimly marked on the sloping sides of the valley; the flat roofs of the monastery scarce outline against the almost extinct sky the quaint petticoated cylinders which stand at their corners and whose streamers and yak-tails are stirred by no breath of wind; a mist fills the valley and the only luminous thing left is, twenty thousand feet in the sky, like a cone of supernatural lava, the snowy and golden ridge of the Donga Pa.

In the half-dusk of the room, we make out a huge silver tabernacle, of undefinable shape, which contains relics. The glimmer of a night-light floating in the middle of a lump of clarified butter shows the repoussé-work of the metal with its interwoven lotuses, thunderbolts, dragons, harpies and lions playing on cymbals.

Beyond the arches of red and gold-lacquered wood, through wonderful silks hanging in strips at the edge of the secret recesses, behind kakemonos large as suburban gardens, we distinguish mural paintings: rishis sleeping in a circle of cut heads; black gods embracing sky-blue goddesses; wise men feeding a jackal on their own flesh; the divine Han-Chi, of whom all creatures that live are born and who opens an eye in each of her thousand palms. . . .

Suddenly, a deafening music bursts forth. Squatting lamas, in red felt mitres with ear-flaps, bang

numbered as one of the most illustrious in Tibet. It is at a few days' march from Leh, the capital of Ladak.

long-bodied drums with curved sticks, beat timbals, blow into brass-belled hautboys, into conchs brought from the Chinese gulfs across the whole of Asia, into silver trumpets five yards long. The monstrous melopœia starts forms in the shadow. Successively there issue from the darkness of the pillars ten mute apparitions, covered with silks heavily embroidered with grinning mouths of chimeras and demons. Above are frightful and grotesque masks: a distorted face with a diadem of skulls; another which has only half a face and through whose one orbit wriggles a snake; a pig's snout surmounted with antlers; hideous swellings, grimaces patiently observed in the course of priceless tortures, a whole debauch of unknown horrors that begins to turn and wind, slowly, sacerdotally, according to evolutions whose form has probably not changed since this dread soil bred men. These ballets symbolize, at the two solstices of the year, the flight and return of a winter so terrible that demoniacal hatreds alone seem able to unloose it. And this dance is, beyond all, sinister, evocative of the pain and the darkness of the old cults. Organized for the inquisitive barbarian that I am, it is a mere diminutive of the biannual festival; and its unwonted sounds make the yellow, half-fierce dogs that keep watch at the convent doors howl and rattle their chains.

PART THE FOURTH:
THROUGH DECCAN

CHAPTER I

DOWN TOWARDS SOUTHERN INDIA

I

Here is Bombay once more, after a year's interval. The traveller has seen Calcutta; opulent and chattering Bengal, lying between its quagmiry deltas and its mountains twenty-eight thousand feet high; Benares, a religious hot-house, the centre of the immense Hindu world, a terrifying swarm of gods and men; Agra, Delhi, Lahore, so different in the magnificence of their Moslem ruins, rich with all the glamour of poetry and glory, from Alexander to Shah Jehan; Central India and Rajputana; the almost never-visited temples of that Bundelkund where thirty-three native principalities still lay claim to their regal rights and where epic struggles and catastrophes took place beside which our Salamis and our Lepantos look like children's battles; Oodeypore, the white palace reflected in a lake strewn with eyots where palms grow through the marble of the cool arcades; then the North: Kashmir, the land of flowers, forests and running waters; the plateaus of Baltistan, all bare in the

silence of the lofty altitudes where the crows eat the eyes of the ponies, left to die by the wayside; the Indus with its glorious memories and its frozen waters; lastly, higher still, where no Frenchman had yet set foot, the highest glaciers in the world, the Baltoro and the Biafo, overtowered by the mysterious summit of Mount Kanchinjanga, the second highest of the Himalayas, the eastern gable of the world's roof, which looks over the plains of China towards the distant Pacific. Then, through passes as high as the top of Mont Blanc, where sometimes he slept in the snow, without tents because of the sloping soil, he came abruptly upon a new world: the valleys of Tibet, of Buddhist and polyandrous Tibet; the prayer-mills under the apricot-trees; the alleys of vase-shaped tombstones; the mounds of stone all engraved with one master formula: "O the jewel in the lotus!" Tibet with its monasteries perched upon corroded rocks, in salt plains marked with the hoofs of wild-asses. Next, down towards the South: the Lower Indus, with its torrid sands; the sacred mountain of Girnar, still haunted by lions, whose promontories are saluted by the Malabar ships as they sail by; Abu, a dream of marble, sanctuaries carved like reliquaries, nimbuses of airy stone around the slumbering, enamel-eyed Buddhas; Ahmedabad, another incarnation of the Moslem soul in an unexpected, delicate art, the monuments of which stain the yellow plains of Guzerat with roses. . . . Is that the end?

No, there is never an end to this land of India, of which, to give a true impression, one must renounce the attempt to give an exact impression. For it is an accumulation of miracles, an overwhelming mass of wonders, an inexhaustible variety of forms, of origins, of ideas, of nature, an undrained treasury of original aspects, of unknown hideousness and of new beauties, a soil of infinitely diverse and variegated powers, which never repeats the same flower: mythologies within mythologies, races within races, worlds within worlds. Judgment abdicates its seat, reason suffers shipwreck, attention succumbs: one is no more than a waif of human curiosity, wild-eyed and tossed about, a vague notion of the immensity of the world and the complication of things, jolting in railway-trains, on camel-back, on elephant-back, on rafts of inflated goakskins or in bullock-carts.

2

From Bombay itself—and the town is a very world, still unknown in spite of the prattle of so many passing through it—what things entreat you across the horizons of the East and South! Here are Ellora, with its mountains cut into colossal sanctuaries, the marvel of India; Ajanta, where are the only frescoes that have survived of Indian painting, on the walls of the sacred caves; Karli, another monolithic nave, shaped like a basilica. Let us scale the Ghats, the formidable and almost perpendicular step which joins the vast table-land

of Deccan to the alluvial shore of the Indian Ocean. From up there, to tempt you, I will show you "all the kingdoms of the world." At your feet lies Poona, the stronghold of that Mahratta power which subjugated India from sea to sea; over there Golkonda! Bijapur will teach you an unsuspected art that took birth, ripened, then died with the glories and catastrophes of a forgotten dynasty; so will Vijayanagar, in a depth of the past even more dim and more magnificent. Beyond are the great pagodas of the Carnatic, the most imposing places of prayer in the world, thanks to the prodigiousness and the massiveness of their monuments. Have you had enough of the work of men? Would you behold the surprises of nature? Up there, the undulating summits of the Nilgiri Hills, which hang blue over the elephant-reserves of Mysore, will reveal to you an unexpected Scotland, with heaths and glens and northern flowers. However, strange tribes, Jewish in type, build their huts there: tribes whose language and origin will doubtless remain problems for all time. Further south, a river hurls itself from the gigantic step of the Ghats down a cataract of three hundred yards. And what is this breeze, laden with spices, that has wandered for days through the palm-trees? It tells wonderful stories of long lagoons where the crabs peel the husks from the fruits of the cocoa-tree, of old Portuguese cities crumbling amid the tropical foliage, with their Jesuit churches, their convents, their scutcheoned mansions, their squares for the autos-da-fé. . . .

CHAPTER II

KARLI—BIJAPUR—PONDICHERRY

I

It is six o'clock in the morning before the great horse-shoe arch cut into the rock of the hill at Karli by masons who died eighteen centuries ago, at the time when the law of Buddha flourished in Hindustan. Six stone elephants guard the porch of the great nave that looks like an overturned ship; and, at the back, around the ritual teak-wood umbrella, the first birds mingle with the last bats. Hanging strips of columns still hold to the vault by their capitals of kneeling elephants and form pendants. A tall pillar shoots up with a very Egyptian air and is crowned by four lions. Above, the blackening walls mount vertically, streaked with darker stripes covered with red, disordered grasses.

And, up high, on the sky-line, three monkeys sit and watch us, their beards silvered by the slanting rays of the dawn. At the end of the plain, the huge red and yellow plain, loom the bastion-shaped, flat-topped hills of Deccan.

2

An adventurer of royal blood left Constantinople one fine evening in the fifteenth century, penetrated to unknown India, where already the glory of the Crescent had preceded him, and founded a glorious line. Towns sprang up, nations submitted, nine kings succeeded one another until the day of the reverses, when, after the most dazzling fortune, the dynasty of Adil Shah succumbed and saw its last descendant, laden with chains of gold, bow before the throne of the Emperor Aurungzeb. A space of two hundred years sufficed to contain these heroic records. At my feet stretches what remains of them, the astonishing poem of stone that is this town of Bijapur, the theatre of one of those tragedies of legend and time of which old India has so many to tell, in words often obscure and garbled, like those which come from the mouths of ancient grandams, to the pilgrims of her misery and her genius.

I look over the flat country where once the aqueducts radiated, amid the fig-trees, to the baths and fountains of the capital. Who would think that the majestic dome to whose outer platform I have come to see the sunset is, among all the masoned cupolas in the world, that which covers the greatest space, a prodigy of technical boldness realized according to the laws of the severest beauty? It shelters the tomb of the seventh king of the dynasty and some others, including that of an adored dancing-girl.

From the travellers' bungalow, a former mosque profaned by the passage of infrequent officials and very rare visitors (for the daily train that goes to Bijapur is one of the slowest in Asia), I can see the gigantic curve dented against a sky all pale with stars. But now, inside the dome, I was listening to it filling with sound and ecstasy, a giant shell re-telling the music of the spheres. Surely this is one of the sublimest endeavours of ephemeral man to project himself into duration. The ethereal roundness of that immense vault suggests the folly of some demigod who should have endeavoured to build himself a heaven. O striking individualism of Islam! This mausoleum, the expression of the loftiest illusions of domination and pride, is balanced, at the opposite extremity of the town, by another tomb, built by the father of him who sleeps here, which, a mass of graceful domes, of ornamented and versicoloured stucco, with a stone lattice-work of Arabic characters punched out of flowered marble, proclaims its trust in death with a smile, in an outburst of gentle, decked grace, forming the most striking contrast. Nevertheless, of these two variations on the theme of *Omnia vanitas*, to the too conscious daintinesses of the Ibrahim Roza I prefer here the chaste and austere simplicity, the great stretches of wall, the eloquence of those joined spaces, encircled by a fillet heightened by a touch of paint, that real architectural beauty stripped of superfluous ornament, that ample, supple, full line, beautiful as a naked gesture.

3

What a charm lies in Pondicherry, that bit of old colonial France, the streets whose names are written in eighteenth-century characters, the grass-grown market-place, the quays waiting for custom! True, a little more activity would please us: these placid inhabitants are too much like the shades of a neglected Elysium; but how winning is the obsolete grace of this colonial gewgaw; and hark! Listen carefully and you shall hear the buzz of the administrative music, the scratching of the pens and the creaking of the high-legged stools! Sweet France! She is at work! Defying the East, the torrid climate, the wheels catch into one another and grind justice, health, all sorts of good things—even initiative, energy, valour, hope—which have passed too near and which this fine machine gobbles up at will. If you doubt the activity that reigns under this apparent torpor, listen to the coffee-coloured elector who serves as your guide: in his lisping French, he talks of the Municipal Council, of rival candidates for the Deputies, for the Senate, of the latest electoral jerrymanderings; and a blessed pride comes over you when you recognize those forgotten words and say to yourself that, if England has prosperity, we, at least, have politics.

I suppose that you do not care to see the Governor? Should you, however, through a sense of superfluous civility, go to the trouble of calling,

you will expose yourself to learning that the first person who, in hospitable India, has not replied to your visit with an invitation is just the first of your fellow countrymen to whom you have paid that honour. Suppose that the hospital and the leper-house had been founded by a distant grand-uncle of your own and that you should express a wish to see them to a doctor who, as it happens, has known, in the Sudan, some old comrades-in-arms of your younger years. It will probably not enter his head to ask you to come to the Club in the evening to read a French paper and see a French face or two. . . .

One would be tempted to be severe if one did not remember that it is not individuals that are to blame in this matter. Our race, first of all, like all those of fortunate lands, have no vocation for hospitality. Our colonial functionaries, on the other hand, ill-paid, recruited in the way which we know of, become morose before their time, addicted to the opium habit, livery and disillusionized. Is it their fault? They work so hard! It would, perhaps, be too much to expect them to show civilities to tourists, official or others. . . .

Meanwhile, the unwonted Angelus rings out from the steeple of the leper-house:

> Era già l'ora che volge il disio
> Ai naviganti . . .

CHAPTER III

MADRAS—THE GREAT PAGODAS

I

A CONCERT for the wounded in the Boer War. In the front row are the Governor of Madras and Lady H——, who is attractive under an apparent official reserve. A similar shy charm used to distinguish a recent British Ambassadress at Paris, who had herself, before that, been Vicereine of India. Among the audience are a few natives of the well-to-do class who come to manifest their loyalty.

The success of the evening is made by a whistling artist. He is recalled and gurgles *Il Bacio*, that Italian waltz to which Patti loves to treat her audiences at the Albert Hall. General ecstasy ensues. If he were to play the guitar with his toes, his crowded hearers could not more eloquently give tongue to the sense of beauty that thrills them through and through. Staggering under this artistic shock, conquered, they settle down to listen to the manly accents of *The Absent-minded Beggar*, sung to a psalm-tune by a gentleman in evening-clothes,

as though the character of the thing did not demand, in its savoury vulgarity, some old khaki uniform, stained, tattered, with the forage-cap cocked over one ear and the plebeian and devil-may-care attitude of the typical Tommy! The "Pay, pay, pay!" chorus assumes a new elegance in the mouth of this faultlessly-attired gentleman. A spiteful critic would perhaps see synthesized in it the ideal character of the war in question. To whom is this solemn gentleman appealing in these Bible tones: the God of Armies or the Golden Calf? The answer to make to the spiteful critic is that he does not know what he is talking about, that the God of Armies and the Golden Calf form two separate entities only for analysts who are behind the times and that people who find a means of being honest, perfectly and serenely honest in their conviction of an accomplished duty, in the midst of the universal outcry, are evidently very clever and much more than intelligent. By some marvellous alchemy, that which would constitute a scruple for people of more delicate stomachs is transformed, in their moral laboratory, into motives of action of the most sacred order. And they remain sincere, I repeat, incorrigibly.

One is always sincere, provided that he bases his conviction upon a profound instinct. Did not the spiteful critic confess to me that he felt an emotion, of a primitive order, it is true, yet an undeniable emotion, when listening to that warlike poetry? It was an emotion of the same kind as that to which

he owed "a little shock" when seeing pass before his eyes, some years ago, the pomp of the jubilee of a foreign queen. It was an animal sensation, no doubt, unless, indeed, it was of a very superior order, a sort of reflex of moral sensibility in which conspire the physical impression of the senses, the suggestion of the surroundings and an adaptability, too well exercised perhaps, to the methods of reflection and emotion of the different races. But what a poor figure reason cuts in all this!

2

The concert takes place in a room adjoining the museum, the most complete, perhaps, in India, at least from the point of view of the southern districts. In addition to some very striking Buddhist low-reliefs, evidently modelled by a Greek artist who had come (after what adventures!) from Taprobane or the northern satrapies, it contains beautiful chased metals and, among other bronzes, a dancing Siva which recalls the great works of the Renascence. Such stray remnants as these bear witness to what the art of India was. From one end of the peninsula to the other, the traveller assists at the tragedy of its death-agony. Native taste, systematically depraved by English influence, turns away from the past. The rich think only of aping the West; the artizans, having no more customers, waste their hereditary stock of skill and mechanical ingenuity on the making of bazaar-wares. All curiosity, every native-

rooted ideal has disappeared. The vile Manchester cottons invade the market, imitating, with this view, the models of other days, but not without risking an innovation from time to time. The director of the museum, a charming and distinguished scholar, who occasionally, in the intervals between his anthropological studies, finds time to deplore the death of Indian art, showed me a stuff from England the border of which represented a motive of bicycles in the loudest colours! And this people has not even any code of artistic tradition.

In spite of everything, when visiting the British-Indian section at our last exhibition, one received the impression of an attempt upon the moral person of a whole race akin to our own and constituting in itself one-sixth of the human species. The artistic effort of the country was symbolized by a few tins of curry, a piano in carved wood, some very badly-stuffed animals and the refuse of all the curiosity-dealers of Colombo, Delhi and Bombay. Had we searched carefully, we might, perhaps, have found copies of Raphael's *Transfiguration* executed by little babus in the famous "schools of art" of Jeypore and elsewhere. These institutions, the legacies of a Ruskinian viceroy, form England's triumphant reply to those naughty people who accuse her of neglecting the æsthetic culture of her subjects!

3

You should see the great pagodas of the South to appreciate in its fulness the humour of that notion of setting little babus to copy Sanzio. It would be almost vain to attempt to describe those pagodas, in spite of their common type, which has been christened by the naturally improper name of Dravidian. Our Græco-Latin sense of measure, of proportion looks upon them with stupefaction, cries out for a lucid emotion. And it is not without a latent anguish that we at last abandon ourselves to the enormous religious intoxication which has caused to spring from the ground those pyramids of divinities and made those extravagant Olympuses taper up in the equatorial sun.

Already there is something overwhelming in the effort to imagine a temple covering eighteen square miles, whose seven enclosures contain about twenty thousand human beings lodged according to their several castes. In the outer wall, which is like a rampart above which rise the colossal gopuras, bricks and brightly-coloured stuccoes, a gate, whose uprights are obelisks eighty feet high, gives access to passages like streets of inscribed stones, to halls of a thousand columns, to courts containing gigantic chariots, fish-ponds, tinsel idols streaming with butter at the back of dark recesses, porches full of the ear-rending clamour of

sacred parrots in their cages, ornate sheds with sloping roofs supported by prancing monsters, black sanctuaries whence a gong sends forth its moan, garlands and festoons, lamps hung from the wild gestures of sixteen-armed statues, flying processions carrying reliquaries or barbarous instruments, a grave, compact crowd, evidently endowed with a sense of the divine totally foreign to ours, busying itself with minute rites, and, above all the other sounds, a cry as of shrill, irregular rattles, the perpetual, piercing screech of the bats of the temple.

On the evenings of the great festivals, figures decked in sacerdotal jewels are led round on golden cows, the three hundred bayaderes reel and whirl among the pillars of the myriad-columned halls. A great madness prevails. Siva is let loose: all quivers in the exultation of the god.

He loves these frenzies. The snowstorms engulfed in his Himalayan caves, the typhoons on the Coromandel Coast, where the surging waves and the flashing lightning of the monsoon shake and envelop his domes gnawed by the sea, the battles of fire around his lava lingams on the brink of the craters of Java: these are his glories. Under his fulgurating voluptuousness, man is laid low like a prey.

It is thus that he dances in bronze in the Madras Museum. Treading an enemy underfoot, himself erect in a circle of flames, with serpents at his wrists, a wide, grave, serene face,

a light drapery, like a vain pain, girding the cruel slimness of his loins, agile, superb, formidable, an image of life at once intoxicated and absolved by the triumphant rhythm of its own beauty.

THE END

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